Volume Forty-eight, Number Five, November 1969

Commentary

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A Novella
by Cynthia Ozick

The Politics of ABM
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Oh! Nudity!
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Books in Review
Dennis H. Wrong Louis Jacobs Edward Grossman
Elizabeth Stevenson Maurice J. Goldbloom

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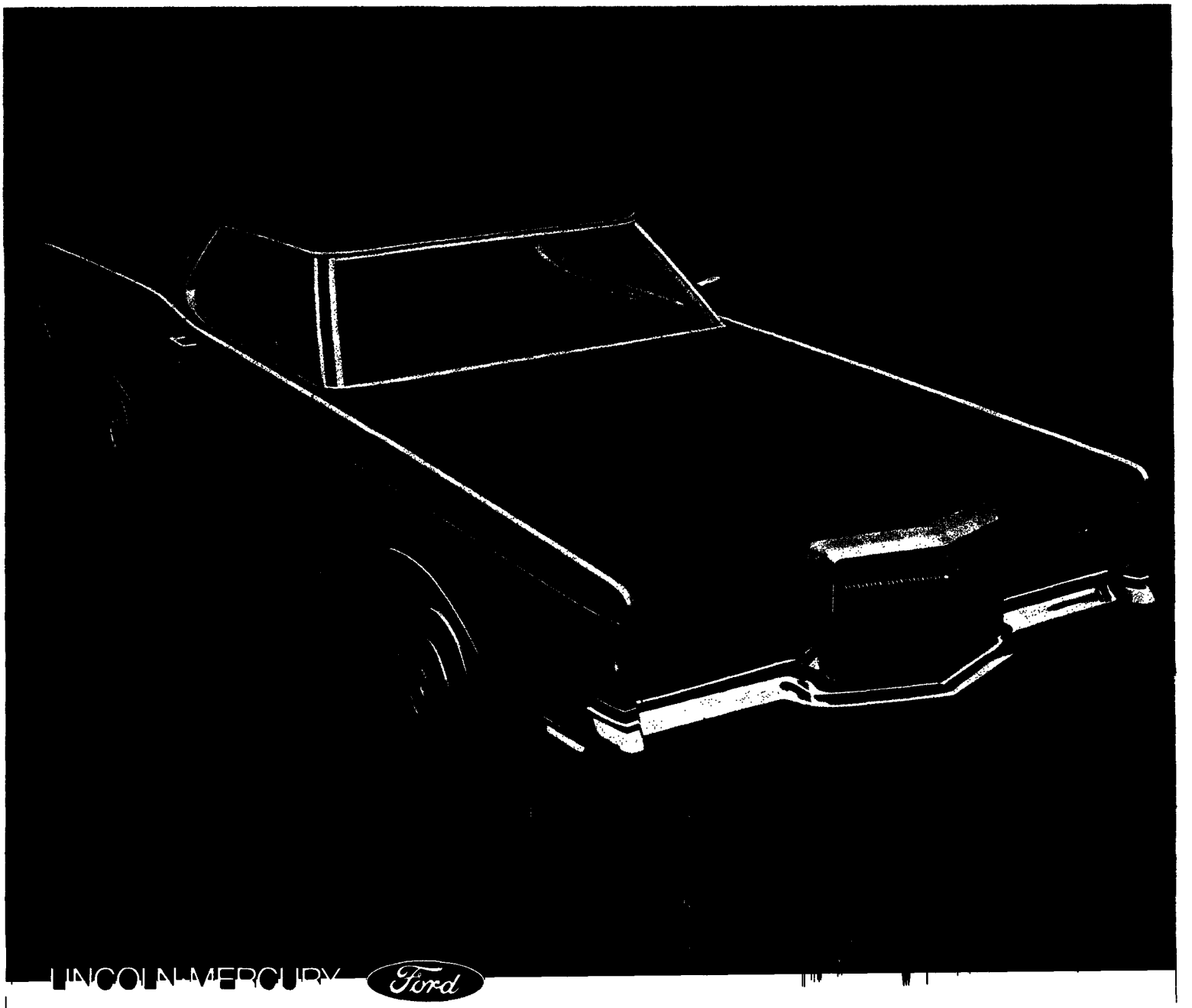

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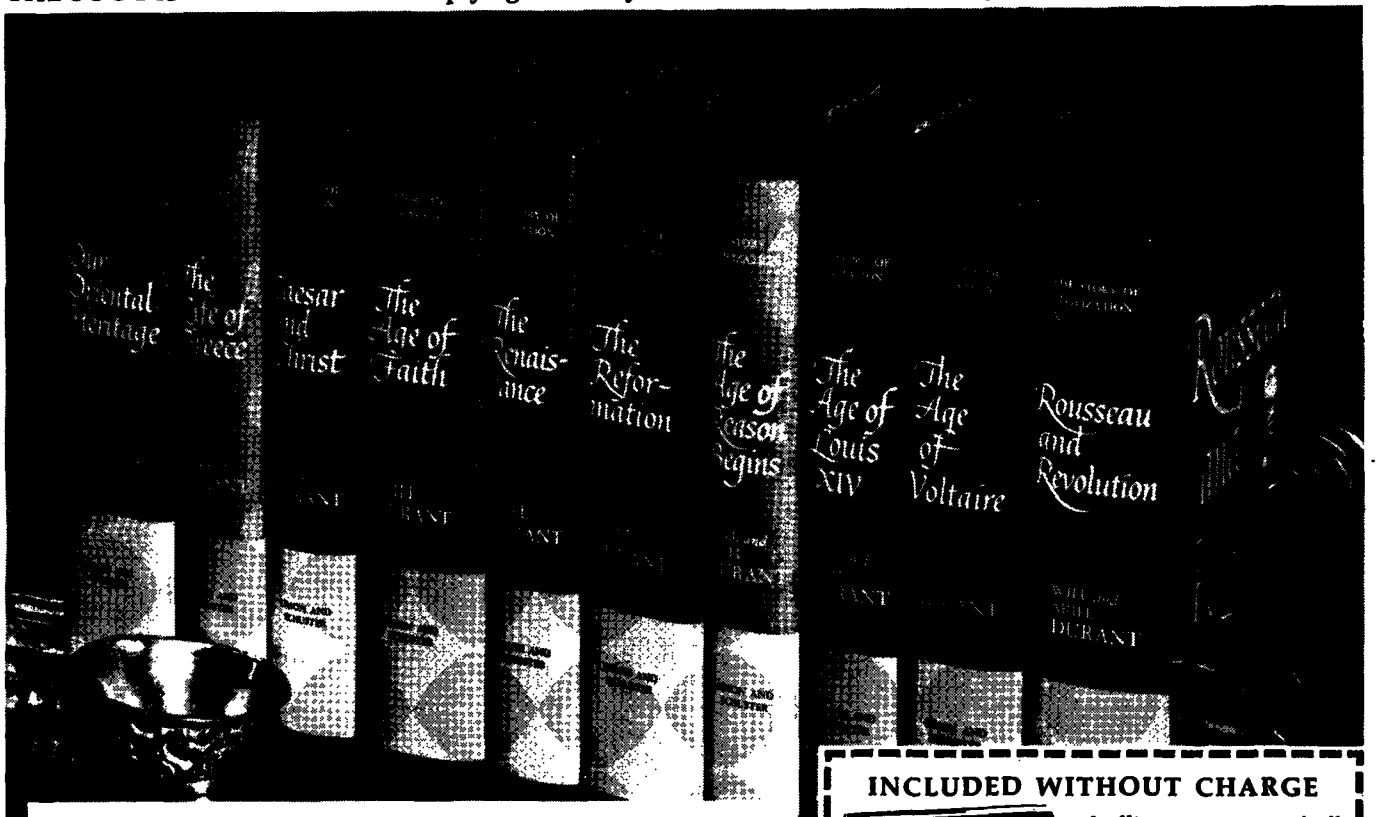

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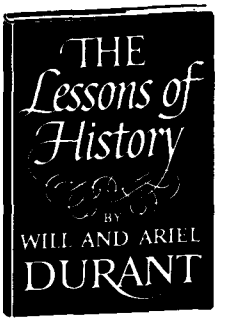

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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

The Cold War

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just read H. Stuart Hughes's "The Second Year of the Cold War" [August], in which he reconsiders that period—March 1946 to July 1947—which he spent in a responsible position in the State Department.

It is clear now, as it should have been to all, that the position of his dissenting group in the Division of Research for Europe was both right and inescapable. There was no way of avoiding acceptance of the fact that at the close of World War II the Soviet Union did dominate "the whole of East Central Europe."

I was a participant in World War I, and have since had a strong aversion to the balance-of-power politics which brought on that conflict, and a corresponding allegiance to the goal of world organization to keep the peace. Nevertheless, World War II had given the Soviets "a sphere of influence" in East Europe.

This was distasteful to most of the people involved and to the West, but the tragedy lay in our failure to remember two things. First, that the British and French governments had deliberately broken down the great Bohemian mountain bastion at the Munich Conference in 1938, and opened Hitler's path into the Soviet Union. As André Fontaine has demonstrated again in his monumental new *History of the Cold War*, it was "their anti-Soviet prejudices" which drove them. Of course the appeasers expected Hitler to defeat both the Soviet Union and Communism easily. The second towering consideration which our original cold warriors of 1946-47 largely ignored was the fact that the Soviet armies had borne the decisive burden of the land war for three years and then fought their way back to Berlin and Vienna. Also, Russia had been ravaged by armies coming through Eastern Europe twice before within thirty years, during World War I and the Western interventions. These three agonies made it as "inevitable" as anything can be that East Europe would be Soviet and Communist-controlled after Russia's great victory in World War II.

Yet it was unavoidable that this major development should seem unacceptable to professional diplomats and other anti-Communist Americans, especially highly-placed ones. As Hughes says: "the Americans were speaking of it as abnormal and immoral."

It was inescapable, too, that in 1946-47 Hughes and his colleagues should suffer about the suppression, with executions, of liberal leaders in the new Soviet-controlled zone. Yet he speaks very accurately when he says about the long cold war that "the armed stand-off between the two superpowers could contribute nothing to improving the lot of the peoples of East Central Europe—rather the contrary: a question that was at bottom one of civil liberties, or the quality of life, could not be dealt with by military means." Hughes clinches this central point with his observation that "not until the 1960's, and more particularly with the replay of Budapest that occurred in Prague twelve years later [in 1968], did it finally sink in that . . . armed hostility was an inappropriate and counter-productive form" in which to manifest "moral anti-Communism."

Now, as our cold war with Russia flickers very low, it is apparent that the Soviet Union has evolved in very conservative directions and that the only hope for her European satellites is evolution—not too rapid—into more liberal ways of living.

How many years of gigantic military spending and of frustrating antagonisms might have been saved if the insights of the Hughes group in the State Department had prevailed in 1946-47!

We might even have avoided bankrupting ourselves, abroad and at home, in trying to control the fringes of China.

D. F. FLEMING
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Hughes reminds us that the revisionists seem to be influenced by the Vietnam war rather than by an unbiased consideration of the facts in the case. It is possible to condemn our current Vietnam policies, declare that we have made mistakes since 1945, and still question the revisionist position that we are largely to blame for the cold war.

One has but to leaf through "The Soviet Union 1922-62," in the *Foreign Affairs Reader*, to be reminded of the events and issues arising out of World War II. In order to gain the fullest degree of control over Eastern Europe, Rus-

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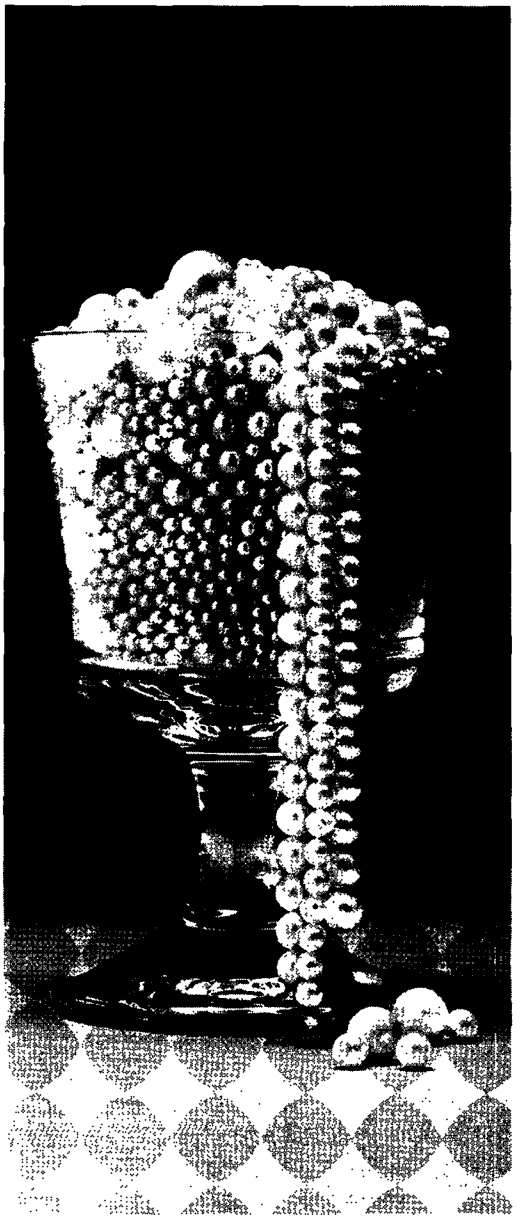

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sia had to attack us and question our motives, even minimizing our war effort. Bertram Wolfe quotes three excerpts from official Soviet histories. The 1945 edition described the Normandy landing as a brilliant achievement unequalled in the history of war. In the revised edition, published one year later, it was merely mentioned as a fact without any evaluation. The 1951 edition has this to say: "But when after the gigantic victories of the Soviet Army, it became clear that the Soviet Union might alone defeat the enemy . . . the English and American armies left England and landed on the coast of Northern France" (the *Foreign Affairs Reader*, p. 303).

The cold-war revisionist campaign reminds one of the changes in interpretation of the causes of World War I. Shortly after Versailles, historians began to reexamine the generally accepted belief that Germany was solely responsible for the war. Sidney B. Fay and others examined pertinent documents and came to the conclusion that the causes of World War I were many and complex and that Germany was not the only culprit. This point of view had wide currency among historians, liberals, and leaders of the peace movement. However, when Hitler unleashed World War II, many people revised their opinions in regard to the former conflict and reverted to the simplistic explanation that the Kaiser had been responsible for it.

One need not be either a Russia-hater or a hawk who wishes to continue the cold war to insist on scrupulous attention to objective historical data in analyzing the foreign policies of the two great powers.

In a closed society it is simple and expedient to revise history at will; in a free country it is neither wise nor desirable to do so without objective documentation.

ISRAEL SOLEMNICK
Elmhurst, N.Y.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I find it puzzling that H. Stuart Hughes should cite three quite unimportant sources and make no mention of the most detailed and definitive work on the subject, namely, D. F. Fleming's two-volume work, *The Cold War and Its Origins*. Fleming, by the way, is *not* a "younger historian." Be it noted, moreover, that the Western powers did not "give away" Eastern Europe at Moscow in October 1944, or at Yalta in February 1945, or at Potsdam in July 1945. The fight was made at Munich in September 1938. Some of us said at the time (probably including H. Stuart Hughes) that Munich meant that all of Eastern Europe would pass under Nazi control, or would be partitioned by Berlin and Moscow, or—if Hitler's madness ultimately led to war with Russia—would pass under Soviet control. All this came to pass *seriatim* and none of the Western "cold warriors" can do anything about it. . . .

FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN
Portland State University
Portland, Oregon

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was East European Staff Correspondent of the Manchester *Guardian* during much of the time Professor H. Stuart Hughes covered in his article. . . . Professor Hughes has got his title wrong. The cold war started quite some years before his time, and it has never ended. It is an illusion to believe that the Americans, or British, could have ended it if they had adopted a different policy at any time. Having been "in the front line," so to speak, of that war, I should like to make a few basic, if raw, points.

The first consideration on the Soviet side when Hitler had pushed Russia into the alliance with Britain and later when Japan had pushed the U.S. into an alliance with both was to preserve the gains made in the alliance with Germany. This is a very natural consideration of plain and honest power politics, but it is always forgotten. The Soviet Union was the only ally that had made considerable gains in the first of the three wars that add up to World War II—that of the Franco-British-Polish coalition against Germany and Russia. In order to preserve these gains the Soviet government had to make sure that the governments installed in Poland and Rumania were absolutely reliable. In 1944-47 only a government under 100 per cent Communist control could be reliable.

This was demonstrated in the most gory episode of the cold war, the refusal of the Soviet Army Command to help the Polish Home Army during the Warsaw uprising. Anyone who has been

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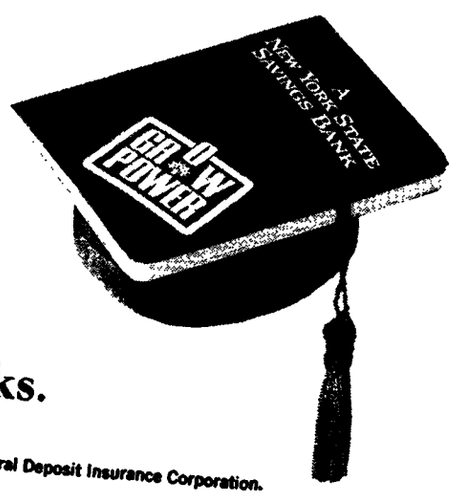

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a short story by Ray Bradbury

The Hour Of Ghosts

It was the finest hour.

It was the most delicious hour in the day.

It was the Hour of Ghosts.

In Timothy's room, an extraordinary mist spun round, took shape.

In Ralph's room, a second phantom of incredible size and mysterious mien reared up.

In Alice's hideaway, across the hall, a third and mournful stranger wove itself from shuttling light, air, and pollens of dust.

In the parlor, below, Father enjoyed *his* Visitation.

And Mother? She moved and worked in the kitchen while the Brewing Witch leaned near upon the warm bake-oven air, pointing to spices, riffling cookbooks, advising mixtures.

You would have had to thrust out your hand to find which was real. Your fingers would have gone right through the Wise Old Thing. Your fingers would have stopped on summer flesh: the Lady of this house.

"Gosh, this is great!" cried Timothy.

"You can walk all the way round them!" said Ralph.

And this was true.

And they circled all around their Ghosts, the private electronic miracles beamed into their rooms.

"They're *real!*"

"And yet not *quite* . . ."

"Say it all again," said Alice to the bright air.

"Yes," said the boys. "Speak!"

And in Timothy's room, Marley's Ghost shook his money-box chains, grieved for his lost soul, and fixed the boy with a pale oyster eye:

"O woe is me! I wear the chains I forged in life! . . . No rest. No peace! Beware, Ebenezer Scrooge!"

While by Ralph's bed, the spectre of Blind Pew clutched a bit of paper with a dark circle inked thereon and cried:

"The Black Spot! I'm doomed!"

And sank in a half-swoon as, from the shadowed corners of the room, came the bang, step, bang, the tread of a one-legged man striding a dark road by some far-off sea.

Alice was in raptures.

Her Ghost, a young woman, hair blowing in the wind, tapped at a snow-blind window and called a wild man's name:

"Heathcliff!"

And swiftly, in the midst of the air, a door swung wide on the winter's night. A man, answering, plunged out and vanished away from Wuthering Heights, lost in blizzards of white that fell to touch the bedroom floor and melt without trace.

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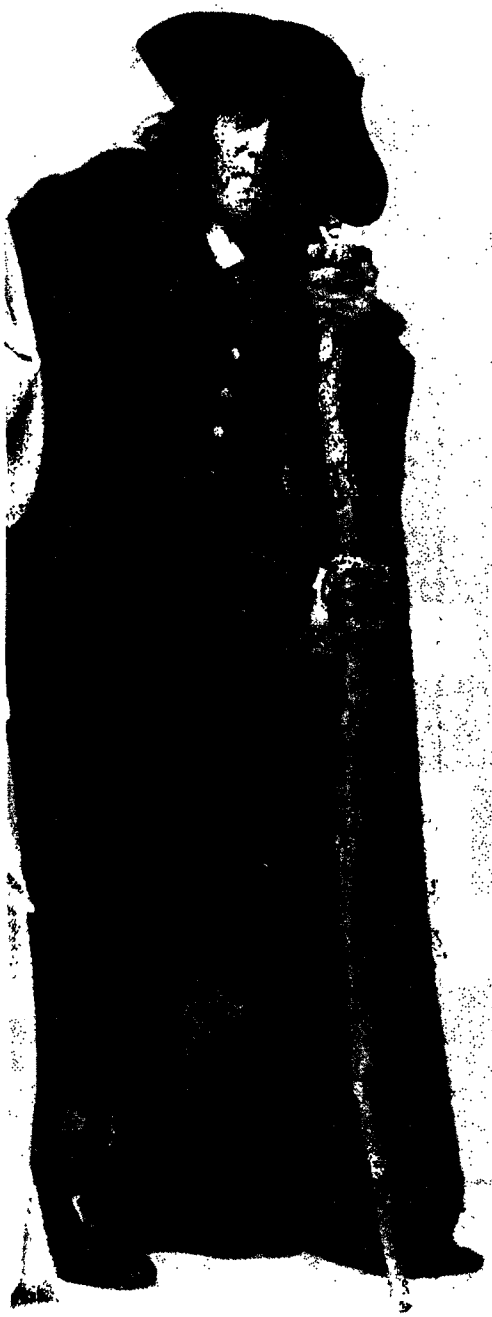
"Holograms," whispered Timothy. "Telecommunications. All done with laser light and extra special machines. . ."

"Don't!" said Ralph, younger but wiser. "I mustn't know that. I just want to *see!* Ghosts are the greatest things ever. After Blind Pew I got King Tut and the Phantom Rickshaw and—heck! why not *now!?*"

He stabbed a button. The laser light rewove its tapestry. Blind Pew unraveled and fled, pursued by a one-legged tattoo.

Out of moorland fogs, in a crack of lightning and a drizzle of rain, a Hound with fiery eyes rose up and bayed.

"Good old Hound," said Ralph. "Good old Baskervilles!"



In the parlor, the ghost of Hamlet's father mourned:

"List. O List! Hamlet . . . remember *me!*"

"One cup of cooking sherry," said the Cooking Ghost, the computerized memory of how to work well between oven and table. "Two . . ."

"Much obliged," said Mother, and touched a switch.

The Kitchen Ghost, obedient to lightning, vanished.

"Dinner!" called Mother, in the hall.

"You," said Timothy-like-Scrooge, "are nothing but a blot of mustard, a fragment of under-done potato . . ."

At which old Marley collapsed upon his bones with a final despairing cry, and was no more.

"Come back at eight!" said Ralph.

And the Hound hid deep in the moorlands grass of the carpet.

"Oh, such lovely Ghosts." Alice wept as the figures of Heathcliff and his love ran away through the walls.

At Elsinore, dawn lit the parlor airs. Hamlet's Father withdrew. And the father of *this* house stood up and went to dinner.

As did all the real children, drawn by a real mother with real food.

The hour of Ghosts was done.

The dusk of laser Visitations was through.

But night lay fresh ahead. And waiting in their rooms, after homework, after studies, other spectres stood alert. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, Future abided in the walls. The Phantom Signalman beckoned his spirit lantern at the top of the stairs. The house was indeed Haunted. . . .

"I've taken the liberty," said Father, "of inviting Plato and Aristotle to dinner . . ."

"They talk too much!" said Ralph.

But suddenly, the two old men were there, gently, at their elbows.

"How goes the Republic?" asked Tim.

"Well . . ." And Plato told him, sweetly, fine, and true.

And even Ralph was astounded after awhile and sat up, blinked, and said, "That *last*. Tell it again."

And Plato told.

And it was *almost* as good as Blind Pew and the whine and bark of the far Hound on the moors . . . .

• • •

Are these the Ghosts of Christmas Future?

Yes.

Not so far off across the sill of Tomorrow, three-dimensional holograms will 'visit' your house.

These friendly Phantoms, invited in through your telecommunications system, will delight, edify, and educate. Or, if Mum's the Word, be still, as you wish.

These are such stuffs as dreams are made of.

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Watch for these friendly spirits.

Ray Bradbury

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In the science fiction of today lie bits and pieces of tomorrow's reality. A reality that all of us in the Bell System are planning for today. AT&T

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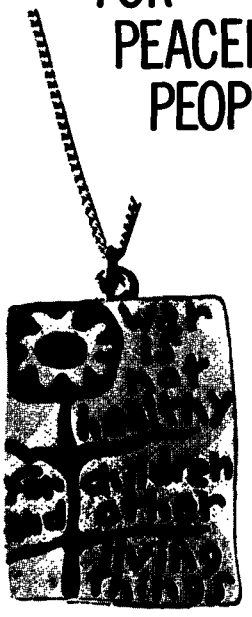

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to Warsaw and seen the width of the Vistula River at Praga knows what this means in military terms. If the cold war had not started before, it surely started then, even for Professor Hughes. In terms of power politics it was quite reasonable, though, to have let the Home Army perish.

The second point is simply this: in every coalition war every partner in the coalition gets something that suits him, that is, if the coalition is victorious. But it depends also on the balance of the military and economic power when victory is won. Since the Russians did not have the atom bomb in 1945, or later, they could not afford a peace treaty. Their position was too weak. The "Iron Curtain" was their answer to balance the atom bomb and Anglo-American industrial potential. . . .

No, the cold war could never have been stopped and it is still going on, as the Paris talks on Vietnam show, and the U.S., even under President Nixon, cannot opt out of it. For even if the Russians were to opt out—of which there is not the slightest sign—the Chinese are just starting.

L. R. MURAY

London, England

"Thanksgiving"—Pro & Con

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I was shocked when I read "Thanksgiving" by Morris Hedges [July]. . . . Yiddish is slowly passing out of the picture—why leave such a bad taste for those of us who still remember Yiddish as taught to us by our parents? There was a time when such expressions were never seen in print, and it was considered a disgrace to hear them spoken. . . .

MRS. FRED GLATZER

Dallas, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Morris Hedges's story is fourth-rate Philip Roth, and I cannot understand your printing such trash. . . .

MRS. JOSHUA LEVIN

Summit, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . "Thanksgiving" is not worthy of your publication. . . . It degrades us all.

ZITA GLUSKIN

Van Nuys, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Morris Hedges's story is in my opinion nothing short of a masterpiece, a brilliant and definitive example of the possibilities which still inhere in a much-abused literary genre. The great days of American-Jewish fiction are perhaps over. Certainly there is no cause to rejoice in the recent popular success of numerous meretricious and cheaply imitative books the very glibness of whose composition . . . attests to the ill health of a once robust narrative tradition. By contrast, the complex richness of Hedges's characterizations, the bull's-eye accuracy and resonance of his dialogue, the difficult but perfectly integrated wealth of imaginative detail—all are to be remarked upon and appreciated . . . ; the story's greatest achievement, however, lies in its powerful and haunting evocation of an entire world of human experience—a world which Hedges is able to convey (by virtue of that total familiarity of a writer with his subject which constitutes the one true and valid aesthetic license), without falling into either sentimentality or self-hatred. All the more reason, therefore, to congratulate COMMENTARY, in this dry and ignorant season, for recognizing, and publishing, the real McCoy. . . .

LEN KOLODNY

East Hawley, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . When I started reading . . . the July issue of COMMENTARY, I could not believe my eyes! Could this be COMMENTARY I kept saying as I waded further and further into a hodgepodge of English-lettered Yiddish reeking with latrine words? . . . As to the anonymous author, I would like to remind him that Yiddish is a beautiful, thousand-year-old language, which . . . deserves much more than the values he gives it.

ELI BODE

Cleveland Jewish Community Center

Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It will take more than one reading to ingest the exquisite fare Morris Hedges serves up in "Thanksgiving." Sonia, mother-absolute of the backstore step-up kitchen with its cherry soda, faulty can opener, and wet drain rack, who would be caricature anywhere else (who needs someplace else?), is the finest portrait of her kind in contemporary Jewish fiction—not excepting one good Til-

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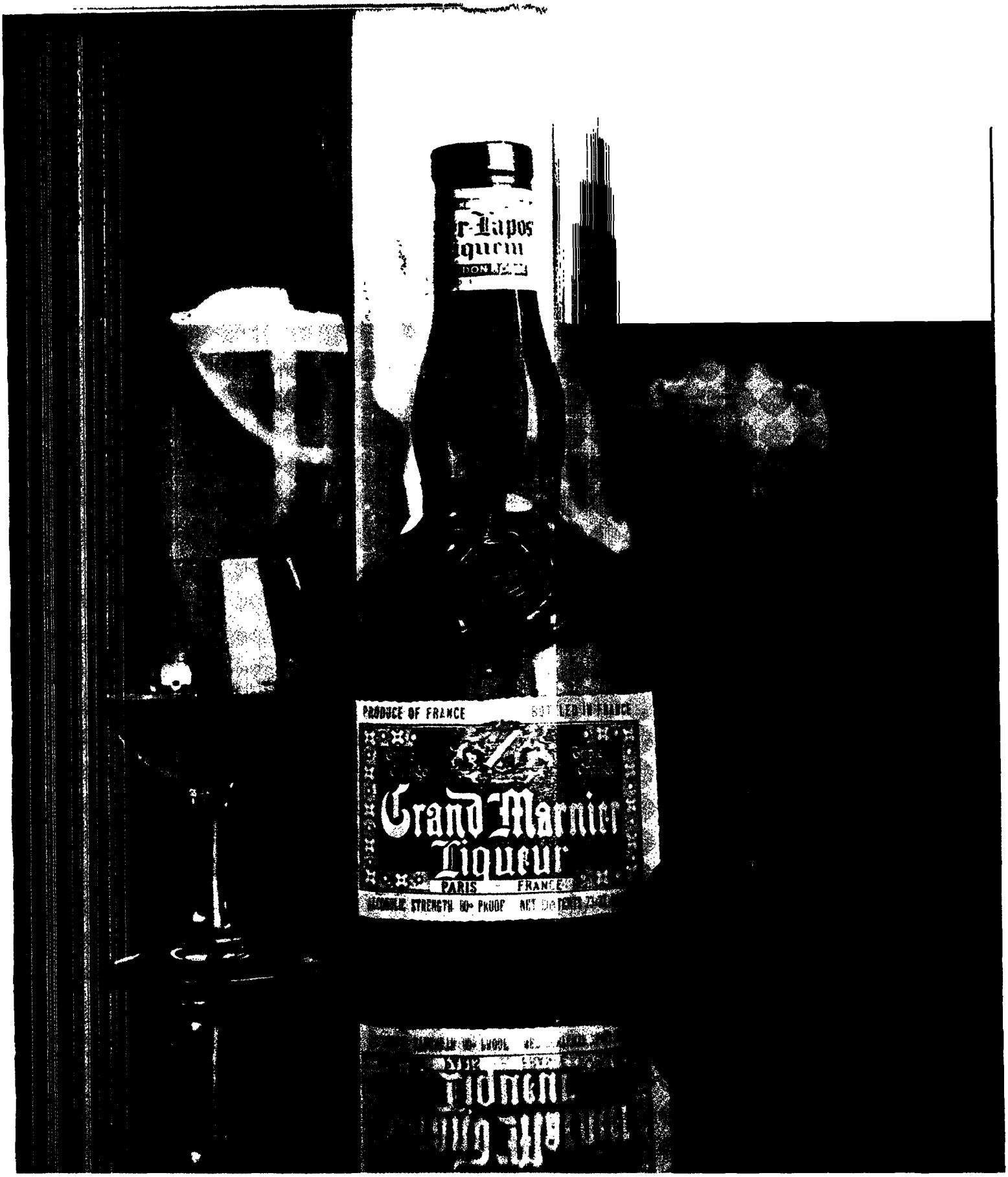

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lie Olsen, two fair Roths, and any three Bruces, Bernards, or Arthurs. . . . The sphere of sensibility which the reader meets in Hedges's story is a rich jungle as true and as painful as Jewish life itself. Out of which comes the professor-son.

FRANCES K. BARASCH
The City College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
. . . I cannot understand how "Thanksgiving" could have passed your editorial approval, unless it was due to the summer heat. I forced myself to finish reading the story, hoping to find some merit or social meaning in it, but I found none. The Yiddish is simply vulgar . . . [and] I suspect it was used as a decoy to cover up literary tastelessness. . . .

GREGORY DRAKE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
That Morris Hedges, better he should remain anonymous. . . .

C. MAILLARD
East Orange, New Jersey

The "Cream"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
I read Leo Litwak's story "The Oath" [August] as one who grew up next door to the Cream of Michigan restaurant in Detroit. Many of his memories are undoubtedly true, one exception being the "Cream," as it was called. The place was run by a Greek, had great food, and was not a delicatessen as the story indicates. It represented a touch of Broadway in Detroit, a local Lindy's, Greek style. The characters who hung out on the corner were exciting to us youngsters of the 30's, and those of us who read Damon Runyon were right at home.

The "Cream" had a quality all its own and, contrary to Mr. Litwak's story, was not famous for barley soup. Its real fame lay in its cream pies and its hot beef sandwiches with coleslaw and French fries for 25¢. Albeit the story was fiction, the Cream of Michigan was not, and I wanted to keep the record straight.

LEONARD E. BELLINSON
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
. . . Among the American Jewish communities of the 1930's and 40's, 12th Street in Detroit was as authentic and as rich in lore as Brownsville in Brooklyn, or Franklin Park on Chicago's West Side.

Brownsville had Irving Shulman to sing its songs. And Meyer Levin treated the Jewish folk of Franklin Park in epic fashion. So we should now be grateful to Leo Litwak for telling it the way it used to be on 12th Street. Such recollection is important because people still live in Brownsville and Franklin and on 12th. The new people there are black, and the experience of black people in America is no doubt *sui generis*. But in attempting to understand what is happening now on those mean streets, we should also keep in mind the unchanging urban experience common to all cityfolk.

Irving Shulman's "Amboy Dukes" were terribly real Jewish delinquents: they frightened the teachers of Brownsville long before black kids arrived on Pitkin Avenue. On Roosevelt Road, in Franklin Park, the Persians and other tough Jewish gangs scowled in the doorway of the same cardroom restaurant that is currently headquarters of the Blackstone Rangers. Now comes Leo Litwak to testify that life was not all the "joys of Yiddish" on 12th in the days before the big black riot.

Mr. Litwak will be pleased to learn that the Cream of Michigan restaurant survived the riot. The food is still good, though the banana cream pie—as celebrated as the barley soup—has been dropped from the menu. . . .

ALLEN ROSENFELD
Detroit, Michigan

Community Control

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
We would like to comment on David Cohen's "The Price of Community Control" [July] and on the issue of community control in general.

Black demands for control of ghetto schools derive from two separate, although related, sources. First, black parents are frustrated and enraged by the failure of urban school systems to educate their children. Second, black communities are seeking to control institutions on which they depend as cli-

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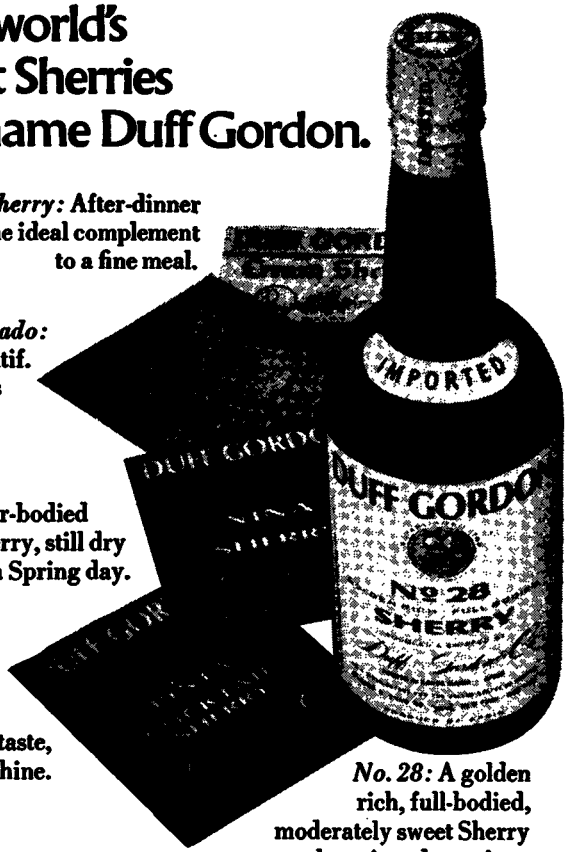

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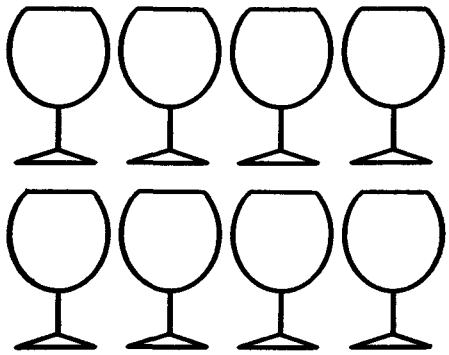

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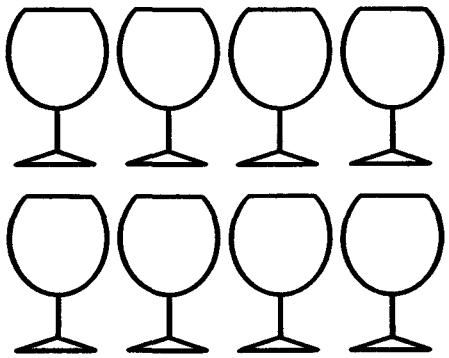

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ents, yet over which they have no say as policymakers. Increasingly, as it becomes evident that the investment of money and effort needed to improve the schools will not be forthcoming under present political arrangements, angry black parents have begun to feel that political change is a prerequisite to educational change.

There are three principal causes for the hostility which many blacks now feel toward present urban school administrations. First, they observe that racial and class prejudice undermine personal relationships, bias the allocation of resources, and shape curriculum content within urban schools. While there is no proof that the elimination of prejudice would contribute directly to greater educational achievement, it remains a worthy goal in its own right. Second, the bureaucratic rigidity and unresponsiveness that characterize very large school systems militate against the thoroughgoing implementation of promising innovative programs. Many school systems can point to successful educational experiments. What they are unable to show is real innovation; that is, changes in the organization of education such that trial programs become an everyday, large-scale reality. Third, those people who have the greatest real interest in seeing improvements in school output—the parents of school children—are those least able to affect the administration and procedures of schools. Instead, the governance of the schools is left largely to bureaucrats, whose principal *interest*, whatever their sentiments, is the maintenance of their own positions.

Decentralization of school administration and parental control of school policy, while they are not panaceas, would have direct positive effects on these conditions. First, possession of real political power would enable blacks to demand a more equitable distribution of resources, freeing them from a total dependence on white generosity. Second, decentralization would force the bureaucracy to be more responsive to local problems. Moreover, the physical placement of supervisory personnel in the field should increase communication between the bureaucracy and its clients and force individual bureaucrats to attempt to please their clients as well as their administrative superiors. Third, community control would introduce an element into the administration of school systems which had as its first objective the improvement of educational output. In "The Price of Community Control," David Cohen quite accurately points out that programs for integration and compensatory education never received an adequate trial because it was in the interest of no powerful group to see that these programs were implemented. Community control is not an alternative to strategies aimed directly at changing conditions within the school; it is rather an attempt to change power relationships such that real improvements in the schools cease to be utopian possibilities and become the aim of potent social forces.

Mr. Cohen fails to deal with these arguments. His failure stems first from a misreading of what we know about the effect of the school upon student achievement; and second, from a faulty political analysis.

What is the effect of the school upon student achievement? In trying to show that community control would not improve academic performance, Mr. Cohen states that most evidence points to the unimportance of school factors in determining student achievement. Is this true? Is the performance of the student unrelated to the quality of his school?

The Coleman Report suggests that factors related to the social-class composition of a student body are *relatively* better predictors of its academic performance in comparison with other groups of students than are indices related to the quality of school facilities and staff. Coleman says nothing whatever about the factors which produce educational development in all children over their years in school; that is, he does not explain how children learn. While the schools may not have improved the black child's performance relative to white students, they have nonetheless increased his skills in relation to his initial performance. It is thus incorrect for Mr. Cohen to say that the school has no "impact upon student achievement." Rather, the school *so far* does not redress the initial social differences among children and, in fact, increases those differences.

Mr. Cohen tries to buttress his argument about the unimportance

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Bruce Glaser, former director of the Gallery of Israeli Art of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and special consultant for the Commentary Limited Editions Program, describes this sensitive portrait study of Abraham as "a very fine example of Chaim Gross's graphic art, one that conveys the artist's personal understanding of the subject in the rhythmic sweep of the lines and in the closure of the composition that echoes Abraham's protectiveness of his wives."

Mr. Gross himself has commented on the sources of his subject:

"The story of Abraham and his two wives, Sara and Hagar, is one of the many biblical narratives that lend themselves so easily to art. The Bible is so rich in illustrative material and it is a source that I feel very close to as a Jew raised in the Hasidic tradition. Perhaps the bird hovering over the patriarch and his wives, which to me is a symbol of freedom, peace, and happiness, is in some way connected with my childhood memories of the Hasidic expressions of joy, music, and holiday festivities. The story of Abraham is ultimately a joyous one as when God prophesied to him, 'I will make they seed as numerous as the sands of the earth'."

BIOGRAPHY

Chaim Gross, the prominent American sculptor and artist, is represented in private collections and major museums throughout this country and abroad—among them the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum; Newark Museum; Worcester Art Museum; Baltimore Museum of Fine Arts; Art Institute of Chicago; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv.

One of the most sought-after of living artists, Chaim Gross was born in Austria in 1904, came to this country in 1921, and has been a naturalized citizen since 1934. He studied at the Beaux Arts Institute, and has taught at the Educational Alliance Art School, Museum of Modern Art, and The New School for Social Research. He is famous not only as an artist but as an author as well; his books include A SCULPTOR'S PROGRESS — AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, FANTASY DRAWINGS, and TECHNIQUE OF WOOD CARVING.

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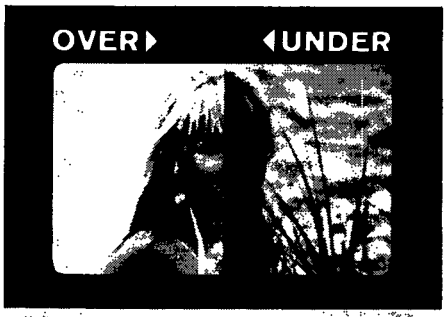

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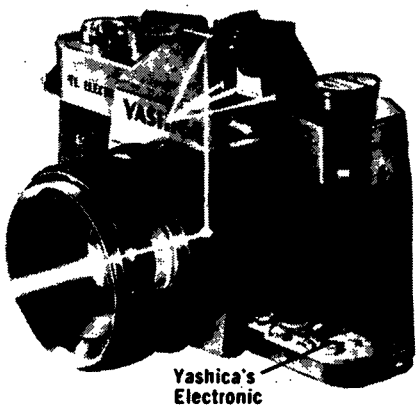

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of school quality by telling us that "differences in achievement [between blacks and whites] are of roughly the same magnitude at grade six or nine as they are at the time children enter school." About these data there is no debate—Mr. Cohen is wrong. Year by year the black child falls progressively *further* behind the white child. This is true on all achievement indices. Coleman reports, for example, that in verbal ability "at grade 6, the average Negro is approximately 1½ years behind the average white. At grade 9, he is approximately 2¼ years behind. . . . At grade 12, he is approximately 3¼ years behind." (Cohen is apparently confused by the Coleman finding that blacks are consistently one standard deviation behind whites at all ages. This is a measure of the distribution of students, not of the difference in magnitude of achievement.)

Mr. Cohen then suggests evidence to show that decentralization and community control make no difference in educational output. He notes that "the Coleman Report fails to reveal any association between the level of parental participation and achievement. Nor is there any evidence that smaller school districts . . . produce higher levels of achievement than larger ones." The Coleman Report, however, looks only at levels of parental participation in such activities as PTA meetings. It could not have reviewed the data on the effects of parental participation in *policymaking* because at the time of the Report there were no districts where parents had such powers. Moreover, the lack of evidence concerning a positive relationship between district size and school performance results from a dearth of research directed at this question; there is no evidence to the contrary either.

What about the effect of student attitudes on student performance? Mr. Cohen rightly states that proponents of community control argue that much of the trouble with ghetto schools hinges upon student attitudes, particularly upon feelings of powerlessness in the face of hostile, white institutions. But his response leaves us puzzled. He tells us to "try it the other way: mastery leads to the sense of mastery; high achievers are more likely to have a strong sense of environmental control than low achievers." And he goes on to claim that this "perplexity" is "amply reflected in research."

Suppose that there is indeed a circular relationship between actual mastery and a sense of mastery. Our policy stance must still be to break into the circle at some point. Where? Educators have been singularly ineffective in raising the "mastery" of black students. It is, therefore, plausible to suggest that we try to change the attitudes of these students, to raise their feelings of self-worth and environmental mastery by changing the nature of the school institution, incorporating it into the black community.

We do agree with Mr. Cohen that community control is a significant political issue. But his argument concerning the effects of the movement toward community control as a political strategy makes little sense. In broad outline, he argues that only fundamental changes in the class structure of the United States will produce a redistribution of educational benefits, but that community control militates against revisions in class structure by dividing a potential coalition for structural change of blacks and white reformist elements.

While Mr. Cohen correctly diagnoses the drive for community control as a political movement, he errs in attributing its motive force to the desire to enforce a consensus on black ideology. He accuses proponents of community control of wishing "to substitute for the old 'rational' tests of educational competence a subjective test of political consensus." As evidence of this, he cites the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board's transfer of teachers and implies that its criterion for judging teachers was adherence to a racially based—if not racist—ideology.

The Board, however, rejected those teachers who were undermining its authority and who, themselves, refused to accept the Board's legitimacy. The Board did not require that teachers in the district support an ideology of black power; it merely asked that teachers cooperate in the effort to make the Ocean Hill schools into a community institution, or go to some other district, where the status of the schools was more to their liking.

According to Mr. Cohen the real price of community control is the effect of the movement in exacerbating racial tensions, and

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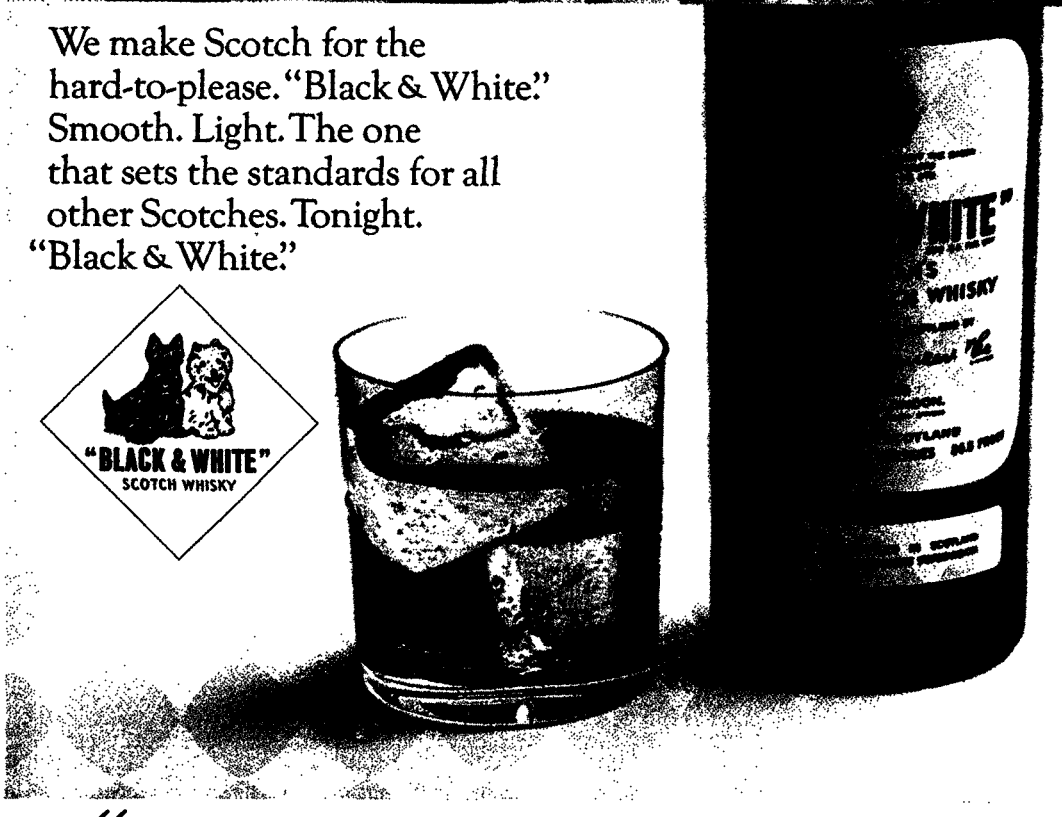

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thereby in deterring our society from "attacking the fundamental disparities which produced" the crisis of authority in the ghetto. Presumably, the attack should be upon our basic class structure and social inequities. After all, if disparities in educational outcome are most closely associated with social class stratification, why not direct our attention to the real problem of social injustice? Community control leads us astray, says Mr. Cohen, for "under community control the basic disparities would remain more or less intact, while the atmosphere and conduct of the schools would show improvement."

But just who is going to lead the noble battle? Surely not those people who have a stake in the present social arrangement.

Mr. Cohen tells us the liberal strategy of school integration failed because it was based upon the "assumption that it is in the interest of whites to reduce the status disparity between themselves and Negroes." As he notes, a political strategy resting on this assumption is not viable. Is it not, then, an excursion into the politically fanciful to suppose that whites will consent to a general social redistribution to the benefit of blacks? By his own logic, Mr. Cohen implies that there are no politically realistic alternatives to community control. The "price" of the movement must therefore be comparatively low. The possible benefits are high and, as yet, unreaped.

SUSAN S. FAINSTEIN, NORMAN I. FAINSTEIN, MARILYN GITTELL
Institute for Community Studies
Queens College
Flushing, New York

MR. COHEN writes:

The Fainstein-Gittell letter, and those of Maurice Goldbloom, Paul Goodman, Betsy Levin, Nehemiah Jordan, and Derrick Bell ["Letters from Readers," September], make three general points. One, I was wrong in saying that schools can't affect students' achievement. Two, they think that I was premature in saying that community control and decentralization won't improve achievement. Three, I was wrong in saying that schooling may not be the best way to reduce racial disparities in adult status.

For the first: I didn't say that compensatory programs couldn't work—I said that the only ones that seemed to were very expensive, and that there was no evidence of any movement to pay that bill. Mr. Goldbloom hopes one materializes. So do I, but I see no *evidence* of it. Nor did I say that the Coleman survey showed that schools didn't affect children—I said that our reanalysis of it (and every other similar survey) showed that schools have relatively little impact on race or class disparities in achievement. Whatever Goldbloom, the Fainsteins, and many others *think* or *believe*, the only reliable evidence is against the view that schools have much effect on these differences. They don't like it, I don't like it, and lots of other people don't like it, but you can't wish it away by saying you don't believe it, or that the evidence isn't good. It's the only evidence, and one can't reject it because it isn't nice. Better reasons are needed.

For the second: obviously I was premature—I said that I was, and I said that none of my evidence on community control and decentralization was based on experiments with these things. The point, however, is that the advocates of these policies always press them on the assumption that they should be tried for Negroes because they hold elsewhere. Decentralization should be tried in the big cities because it works in suburbs. Community control should be tried in black communities because it works in white ones. Community control will improve achievement because attitudes about control affect achievement. My little exercise was an effort to see if, in this reasoning by analogue, the analogue held. I found, as the essay said, little or no evidence that it did. I was surprised; they are angry. They think I'm wrong, or the evidence is the wrong sort. They may be right, but at the moment I've not seen any *evidence* from any quarter which suggests that they are. I hope they are, because if so, equality will be much easier to attain than I suspect. I prefer equality to debates about it, even in COMMENTARY.

On the third: Mr. Jordan thinks education is essential to eliminating racial disparities in

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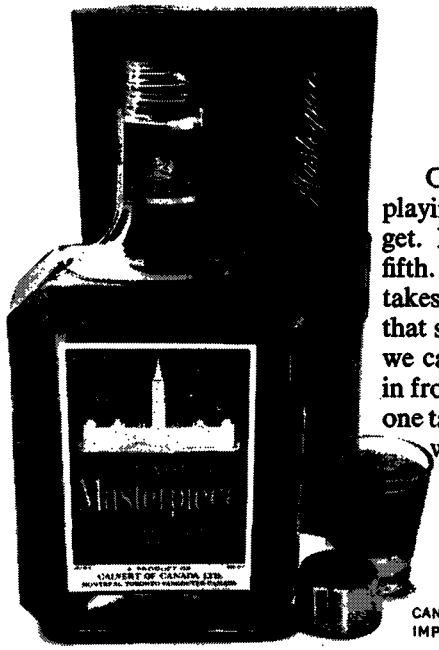

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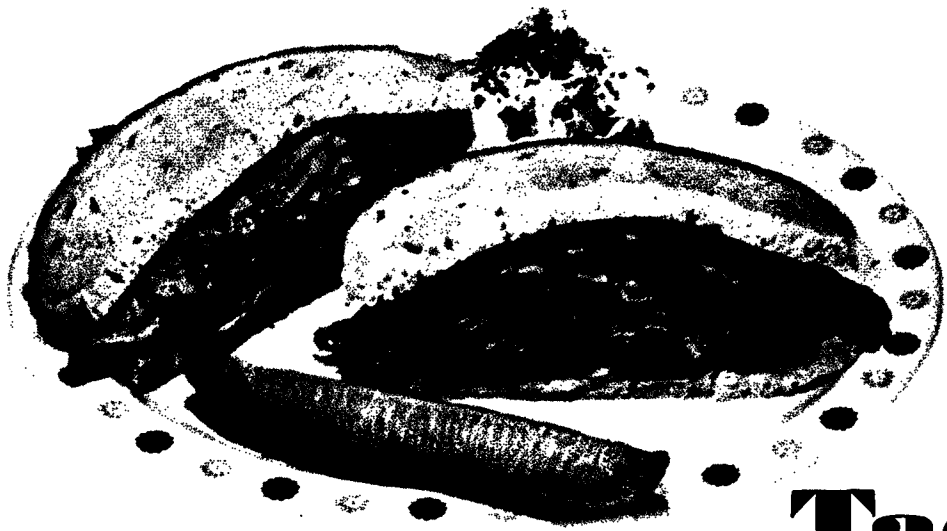

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social and economic status, and he thinks I'm wrong for saying that maybe we should attack the inequalities directly, rather than indirectly through the schools. He doesn't see how the disparities could be eliminated without schooling. He might try by imagining the elimination of black-white income disparities when education and occupation are equal; he could then move on to the elimination of black unemployment, which a combination of more jobs and on-the-job training seems likely to accomplish; he might then conceive of housing for blacks no worse than that for similarly situated whites. None of these involves schooling, and while they are not exhaustive, they'd be a good start.

Soviet Oppression

To the Editor of Commentary:

I read with great interest Maurice Friedberg's "Soviet Jewry Today" [August]. It is hard to imagine a better summary of the current situation of Jews in the USSR, but it might be of some interest to your readers to point out that in one important respect the "inability to view the subject of Soviet Jews within a general Soviet framework," of which Mr. Friedberg complains, is even more widespread than he seems to realize. For at least the past decade, while our news media have been giving increasingly glowing accounts of post-Stalin liberalization, the oppression of religion and of the non-Russian half of the Soviet population has been steadily worsening. It is certainly true that this pattern, although general, is not uniform; it is also true that the Jews are in several respects the most vulnerable, and at the same time the most brutally assaulted, of the communities involved. But they are not isolated exceptions to an otherwise generous Soviet policy. I mention as examples the forced closing of many thousands of Russian Orthodox Churches that began in 1959; the wave of arrests of writers and other cultural leaders in the Ukraine that began in 1965; the suppression in 1959 of the movement for national integrity headed by E. Berklavs in the Latvian CP—and many more could be adduced. On the whole, the American media have been utterly irresponsible in failing to report these developments, and it is only the Jews who have been able to break through this pattern to any significant degree.

In contrast to what anyone else has done, the achievement of the American Jewish community in the twofold task of informing first itself and then the general public about the persecution of Soviet Jewry is outstanding, however short it may fall of what could and should be done. Had other Americans with a special responsibility for one of the persecuted communities in the USSR achieved anything comparable, we would not have needed last year's atrocity in Czechoslovakia to dispel the golden haze with which we like to surround Soviet affairs. . . .

Stephen C. Reynolds
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

Greeks, Jews & Macmillan

To the Editor of Commentary:

The article by Milton Himmelfarb, "Hebraism & Hellenism Now" [July], is a curious mixture of scholarship and twisted logic. Poor Hellenism! It was a civilization that left no priests or rabbis to support it eternally. So we have: "Cultivated humanism is Appollonian Hellenism," which, according to the author, led to Hitler's persecution of the Jews. Was Apollo really a precursor of Hitler?

Spyridon Granitsas
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . The justification for the Six-Day War can be found only in the fact that it was necessary, indeed, that it was unavoidable, in order to insure the continued existence of three million people. But Mr. Himmelfarb would have us endorse as miraculous this of Mr. Macmillan: "The other day, while the world debated, Israel's three millions imposed their will on their enemies." So it was not necessary, or if it was, that is not what we are asked to regard as miraculous. It is the fact that we are not used to being thought of as right, and now no lesser authority than an ex-Prime Minister confirms for us that to impose one's will is right, nay, more than that, praiseworthy. . . .

I greatly admired the technical skill of the operation, as I have no doubt did many Arabs—I mean this quite sincerely—a mere six days for a war bears witness to a remarkable efficiency. But then,

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AGE: 29

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HOBBIES: More photography

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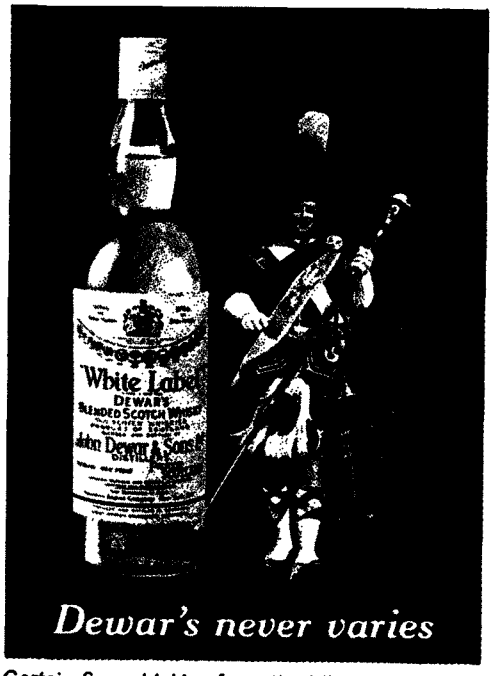

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as the world was debating some thirty years ago, there were also, I am sure, countless thousands who marvelled at the brilliant, swift campaign then being waged in Europe by those others who also wanted to impose their will. And although, as Mr. Himmelfarb points out, we have all written papers consigning Fichte, Carlyle, Mazzini—not to mention Hegel—to the rubbish heap, I am not sure that we can yet claim to be so much taller than our predecessors—much less that we stand on their shoulders—and, at any rate, certainly not while we continue to believe that imposition of one's will was wrong in Poland and Czechoslovakia but is now right and a positive virtue in parts of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. . . .

MICHAEL LANGDON

Madrid, Spain

MR. HIMMELFARB writes:

Hellenism, said Matthew Arnold, is that power which enables us to see things as they really are. It does not seem to have enabled its defender, Mr. Granitsas, to see things as they really are written. I quoted Ralf Dahrendorf as saying that cultivated humanism did not prevent those graduates of German Gymnasia from stamping out people like ants. For Mr. Granitsas, "did not . . . prevent . . . from" equals "led to."

Mr. Granitsas's rhetorical question implies that I said Apollo was really a precursor of Hitler. That is scarcely a Hellenic or Arnoldian understanding of what I actually wrote: "What might a Dahrendorf not have had cause to say if those Gymnasia had been largely Dionysian? (Let this be said for Apollo, that of all the—it goes without saying, non-Hebraic—gods, he is the least given to drinking blood.)" In my conclusion, while insisting that Hebraism is essential and that its neccessary proportion is higher than modern Jews used to think, I called Hebraism by itself insufficient, and too simple.

"Antoninus Pius, for his desire to search to the least differences, was called *cumini sector*, the carver of cumin seed"—that is to say, the hairsplitter. He is alive and well, in Madrid.

In saying that "Israel's three millions imposed their will on their enemies," Macmillan meant that the Israelis were victorious, preventing the Arabs from destroying Israel and killing the Israelis. Of course, Macmillan spoke when people remembered something about Arab war aims and the circumstances in which the war had broken out. Does Mr. Langdon, who still remembers, prefer to forget? It is not altogether clear whether he is eager to seize a pretext for abandoning history in favor of myth. Maybe it is only a kind of linguistic or literary tic that causes his attention to be arrested by Macmillan's choice of words and makes him think long, censorious thoughts.

Why did Macmillan say that three millions imposed their will on their enemies, rather than that the Israelis defeated the Arabs? His rhetorical purpose is not impenetrably ambiguous. He was extolling heart and mind (and will), declaring their price to be far above numbers. In the sentence before, he had recalled Britain's greatness when the British were few: "In the time of Elizabeth we were only two million people, in the time of Marlborough only five or six million, in the time of Napoleon only ten million"; and in the sentences after, he went on to say that Israel "had what any great people need—resolution, courage, determination, pride. These are what really count in men and nations." He was making a traditional comparison between *le moral* and *le matériel*, like Napoleon's statement that in war *affaires morales* count for three quarters, and *forces réelles* for one quarter.

Mr. Langdon cannot approve my promiscuity with miracle. As in the beginning, I said, so now: miracle, the miraculous, is what one gapes and stares at: what is in a high degree remarkable. The contrast between Macmillan in 1968 and General Sir Evelyn Barker in 1946—"punish . . . the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any, by striking at their pockets. . . ."—is in a high degree remarkable. (No need to repeat here the contrast between Macmillan and the Oxford English Dictionary, or Rahel Varnhagen, or Heine, or the Viennese Jew with his reservations about Dr. Herzl's idea.)

Despite Antoninus Pius's carving of cumin seed, on the whole he is well-reputed. Let Mr. Langdon take heart, therefore—if that propensity and not something else explains his letter.

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Theater

Oh! Nudity!

Jack Richardson

THE DEPRESSING thing about *Oh! Calcutta!* is that, for all its cool amusements and gritty determination to titillate, it ends only by proving that our society has a long way to go before it can produce and enjoy a truly licentious spectacle. We are now great pretenders to abandon, simulators of bacchanalia, amiable bluffers when it comes to sensual expression. We no longer, it is true, confront our concupiscence with righteous words and armaments, but we have devised equally effective ways to keep ourselves from letting sex turn into a social diversion. With all the prolix waffle about the imperial decadence of our times raised by moralists, and the equally outsized congratulations produced by those who seek unqualified liberation from old totems and fears, what exactly would, say, a Tiberius find around town to keep him stimulated?

Well, there are the Broadway bookstores where he could skim through brusque little pamphlets that have all the sweet allure of gynecology textbooks; he might hie himself off to an "X"-rated film where he could watch naked Brobdingnagian lovers fill up an acre of screen and where an artistic cameraman will make certain, by shooting over a Mt. Rushmore thigh or through the Grand Canyon formed by a pair of suggestive feet, that one never glimpses anything remotely like a complete human body in the act of making love; he could take in a grimly defiant off-Broadway play that has a handful of sweating actors defending their nakedness with political dialectic or some impenetrable mysticism—but, wherever he were to go, he would soon learn that someone out for an unqualifiedly prurient time, someone who sincerely wants to be sensually aroused in public surroundings, is not welcome among us. Between him and the objects he wishes to enjoy we set up murky sheaths of style which we call variously "art," "freedom," "self-expression," "honesty," etc., and which we use to mitigate passion and to make it serve its moral betters. Oh, of course, Tiberius could stay inside the bookstores flipping through magazines, or, for twenty-five cents, peek into a movieola and watch two aging models pretend to be lesbians, but these, for a man of taste, are low-bred, slave amusements. Finally, he would have to understand that there are no cultivated public moments of sensual excess in our culture which are not attended either by a philosophic program or by some exonerating, all-in-fun wink, a gloss of humor which, at our best orgies, makes of an erection an instance of blunt literalness and bad manners.

NOW ALL these anaphrodisiac attitudes toward intelligent, communal lust seemed in the pre-opening interviews with Kenneth Tynan, *Oh! Calcutta!*'s spiritual planner and organizer, to have been anticipated and dealt with. I was impressed with his pronouncements that art was to be secondary to sexual stimulants, that the erotic, without having to bear an aesthetic cargo, was finally going to be allowed its turn on the modern stage. "A program for the intelligent voyeur," is, I believe, how Tynan announced the intentions of *Oh! Calcutta!* in one of our papers, and, hoping to meet both criteria, I looked forward to an evening where all the old saws of dramatic art might be forgotten and one could simply wallow in lascivious imaginings staged with noble pornographic taste and style. Any *a priori* doubts that I entertained about the undertaking had a personal basis; for I, too, had been asked to come up with a sketch for the evening and had been assured that what was wanted was neither art nor device but only the simple transcription of one of my favorite sexual fantasies which I might care to see acted in front of me on any night I dropped into the theater. I was told that a collection of writers were at that very moment putting their closet dreams down on paper and that the result would be a string of finely-wrought sexual aids untempered by any public restrictions or notions of dramatic smoothness. I enthusiastically approved of the project, but problems arose as soon as I attempted to imagine one of my caprices presented before an audience of five- or six-hundred paying customers. I shuffled through my whole wanton supply, moving backward from the rococo intricacies of my mid-thirties to the direct, sportive freshness of adolescence. However, among all these well-worn visions that had served me faithfully over the years, among all the fads of excess that I had accumulated for moments of solitary indulgence, none seemed substantial enough to fill a stage or appeal to the erogenous zones of half a thousand strangers. Ruefully, I concluded that my fantasies were of a retiring, tepid sort and I withdrew from the adventure. Others, I felt, must have heartier orgiastic phantoms which could stand up under mass perusal, and I would leave it to them to fill an auditorium with unabashed carnal spectacles.

Well, of course, *Oh! Calcutta!* turned out to be nothing of the sort. If those scenes on stage were truly the sexual fantasies of the authors, then I can only commiserate with them for having that interesting corner of the human mind warped by the standards of American show-business. On the whole, what was purported to be an experiment in cultivated erot-

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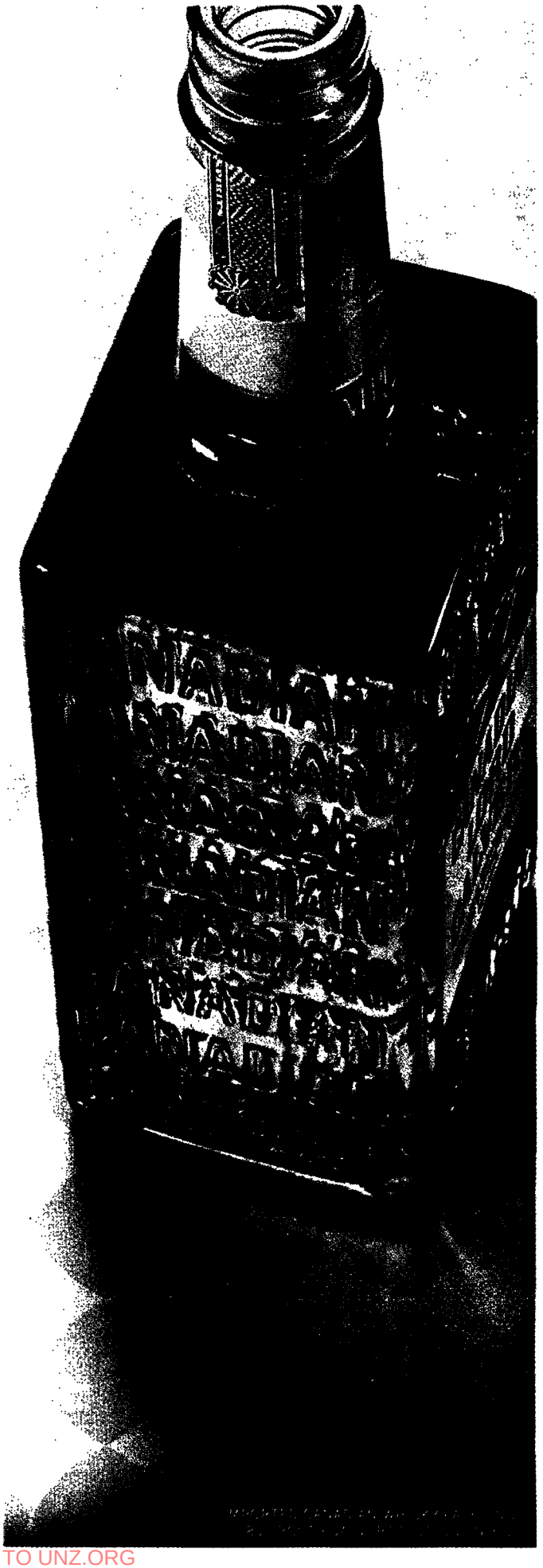

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icism became finally little more than a burlesque review minus the old *double-entendres* and the striptease. One was treated to skits, sketches, and jokes about sex, all played in a frank, sock-it-to-'em style which left no doubt that those concerned with *Oh! Calcutta!* had abandoned any notion of creating a sensual aura and had fastened instead on putting on a fast, sleek, successful entertainment. In place of amatory deliriums, the audience received some waggish spoofs performed in such a way that there was laughter on both sides of the stage at the expense of the evening's subject; for there is nothing more inimical to erotic excitements than the sort of wit which allows one to feel that the odd poses of copulation and the peculiar fetishes of passion are quaint anthropological curios that we have long since evolved beyond and can now look back on with good-humored wonder. And so, as the evening went on, everybody began to feel cool and comfortable, watching pleasant performers bound through a comedy of manners that got its laughs, did its job, and hardly for a moment pretended that anything more than sly fun was meant to be had from the evening.

THE REVIEW'S opening number really tells much of the story. Backs to the audience, the members of the cast undress, don robes with *Oh! Calcutta!* stenciled on their backs, and then step to the foot of the stage where they twist through a slow, sensuous dance while, at intervals, they whisk their robes back and permit the audience good, long looks at the sexual parts it will be dealing with for the rest of the show. Enticing? Hardly. For the way in which these articles of gender are thrust in our faces makes it clear that we are being admonished to divest ourselves of our cumbersome, antique pruriences and move along smartly into an atmosphere of clever, uninvolved observations. The dance is an acclimatizing prologue which seems to say, "All right, let's get this anatomical thing over with right from the start. We've got a show to get on." And so, at the beginning, we are allowed to savor and wonder about nothing, the secrets of those we have come to watch perform are without ceremony tossed in our laps, and we are made aware that the tone of the evening is to be that of a challenge rather than a caress. In short, no matter how cleverly disguised, what lies ahead of us is some more sexual didacticism.

Ah, well, perhaps my expectations were too high, too unreasonable for the times and for the stage. And, too, it should be said that there is much of what could be called traditionally good theater about *Oh! Calcutta!* From a scene where a lady performs fellatio on a flashlight to a sketch where a young man, musing on a farmhouse porch, sends his father into a coronary crisis with the slow, drawling, bucolic revelation of his sexual specialties and delights, there is a richly styled gamut of ribaldry which the play's cast runs with direct, uninhibited ebullience. Since the management has decided not to specify which author is responsible for the individual pieces and leaves it to the audience to make its own matches, one can only report on the different sections of *Oh! Calcutta!* as if they were distillations of what the contemporary literary mind takes to be amusing about our sexual habits. It seems then that the one foible the general satirical spirit is most happy with is the difficulty which a loose but unromantic age has in getting itself up and aroused. The two most solidly put together and artfully contrived sketches of the evening deal with this carnal torpor and the methods we contrive with which to enliven our diminishing urges. The first depicts a pair of lovers so weighted down and lost within the labyrinthian cluster of fetishes they need for amorous spicing that they lose sight of their primary climactic goal while manipulating gimmicks and costumes; the second concerns a quartet bent on re-stimulation who meet through the channels of a swingers club dedicated to arranging *à quatre* get-togethers between married couples who have decided that their bedroom world is in heavy need of novelty and new

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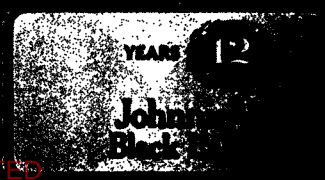

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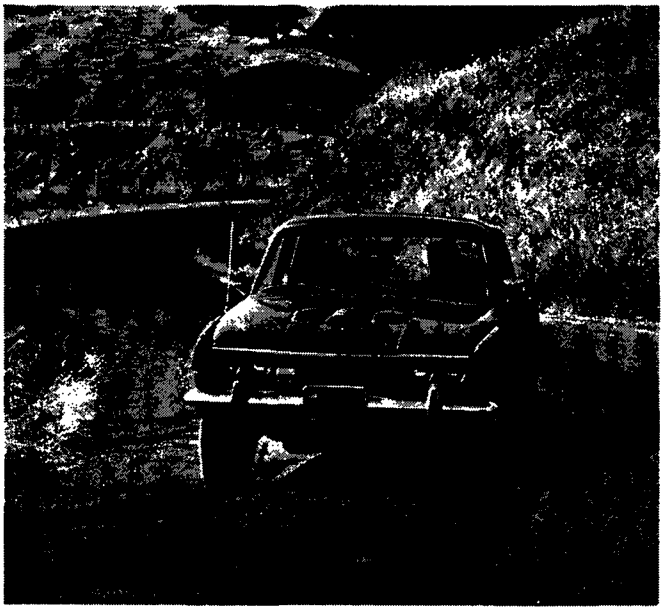

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22nd Left Teaneck for York via N.J. and Penna. turnpikes	239	60.8	17.9
23rd Visited York and travelled to Harrisonburg, Va. on Hwy. 81	201	57.4	18.3
24th Travelled to Birmingham on Hwys. 81, 75, 59 and Rt. 11	638	57.9	17.25
25th To New Orleans on Hwys. 59, 10 and Rt. 11	364	62.6	16.10
26th To Fort Worth, on Hwy. 20 and Rts. 61, 190 and 71	539	46.7	17.90
27th To El Paso on Hwys. 20, 10 and Rt. 80	611	(not noted)	17.65
28th To Tucson on Hwy. 10	352	(not noted)	19.90
29th To Los Angeles via Gila Bend and Yuma, Hwys. 10, 8, 5 and Rt. 80	551	56.0	18.60
30th Stayed in L.A.	14	(not noted)	(not noted)
31st To Las Vegas via Death Valley and Beatty, Hwy 15, Rts. 127, 190, 58, 95	481	48.7	16.6

September	Miles	Average M.P.H.	M.P.G. (U.S.)
1st To Williams, Ariz. via Hoover Dam, Rts. 93 and 66	395	62.8	16.85
2nd To Raton, N.M. via Albuquerque, Rts. 66, 84, and 85	748	60.9	19.6
3rd To Colorado Springs, Col., Hwy. 25, Rts. 160 and 85	150	65.2	20.3
4th Climbed Pikes Peak twice and explored. 18.5 mile climb of Pikes Peak took 53 mins. from Toll gate to summit 14,110 ft., following traffic	129	(not noted)	20.3
5th Travelled to Des Moines, Hwys. 25 and 80	793	75.0	17.1
6th To Toledo via Rockford, Ill., Hwys. 80, 50, Rt. 51 and Toll road	705	66.3	17.1
7th To New York on the Turnpike	610	65.7	19.3
8th Travelled to Pound Ridge	129	(not noted)	(not noted)
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inhabitants. Both these pieces, though more antic than that which one generally comes upon in the commercial theater, nevertheless are squarely in the fashionable, psychoanalytic tradition of the Broadway farce which, unlike the more robust, older comedies of conquest, finds its humorous obstacles not in getting to the lady's boudoir but in achieving a certain measure of sportful gratification once one is there.

However, there is one moment in the evening when the jibes and joking cease and a small amount of unguarded sensuality is allowed a time on stage. The moment is a dance, a *pas de deux* executed by an exquisitely proportioned young couple who move with such lascivious premeditation that one can forget the hideous, inapposite music that accompanies them and fall into delightful contemplation, uninterrupted by theatrical and literary gadgetry, of naked bodies in a curious variety of startling physical attitudes. Anyone who, at the ballet, has been diverted by the notion as to what the elegant forms before them would look like stripped of their costumes and made to pirouette, *plié*, and jump in nakedness, will be pleased to find that there is no diminishing of grace but rather only a happy increase in sensual excitation and bemusement. Suggestiveness is not lost either, for since, mercifully, the dancers are silent, the spectator's mind is free to articulate for them, and thus the most primitive but necessary condition for an erotic imagining—namely, control over it—is allowed to happen without the sobering and distance-provoking intrusion of a writer's commentary.

EXCEPT FOR this interlude of dance, one would have to say that the nakedness in *Oh! Calcutta!* is hardly used in an imaginative way. The ensemble numbers, as I have mentioned, are much too blunt for any delight to be had from the participants who, by the way, are the best nudes yet turned up during this theatrical fashion in New York. But even the most noble bodies begin to dim away and become commonplace after a few minutes if they are used to no real purpose, and too often during the evening breasts, rumps, and thighs just hung about heavy with gravity while some lines and situations were spun out, as though by accident, around them. Instead of ogling and enjoying these bodies, the viewer finds himself perusing them aimlessly through the night's tedious moments as though they were bits of diverting scenery. It seemed indeed lamentable that such endowments and willingness on the part of this acting troupe were put to such poor use, and that such fine, eager submissiveness found no better style to accommodate it. One almost has to chide the creators of *Oh! Calcutta!* for not really having any scenes enticing or feverish enough to give a naked character a justifiable context, aesthetic or pornographic.

BUT I HAVE come back to complaining over missed erotic values, when perhaps such values need too fine and personal a balance ever to be well worked in front of a random audience of my contemporaries. Still, considering many of the people involved with *Oh! Calcutta!*, there were hopes that a better effort might have been made. As it is, I can say the evening trotted along briskly and professionally and that a good, tasteful, entertaining show was provided. For myself, I could not say anything more disappointing.

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Envy; or, Yiddish In America

A Novella

Cynthia Ozick

EDELSHTEIN, an American for forty years, was a ravenous reader of novels by writers "of"—he said this with a snarl—"Jewish extraction." He found them puerile, vicious, pitiable, ignorant, contemptible, above all stupid. In judging them he dug for his deepest vituperation—they were, he said, "*Amerikaner-geboren.*" Spawned in America, pogroms a rumor, *mamaloshen* a stranger, history a vacuum. Also many of them were still young, and had black eyes, black hair, and red beards. A few were blue-eyed, like the *cheder-yinglach* of his youth. Schoolboys. He was certain he did not envy them, but he read them like a sickness. They were reviewed and praised, and meanwhile they were considered Jews, and knew nothing. There was even a body of Gentile writers in reaction, beginning to show familiarly whetted teeth: the Jewish Intellectual Establishment was misrepresenting American letters, coloring it with an alien dye, taking it over, and so forth. Like Berlin and Vienna in the 20's. *Judenrein ist Kulturrein* was Edelshtein's opinion. Take away the Jews and where, Oh so-called Western Civilization, is your literary culture?

For Edelshtein Western Civilization was a sore point. He had never been to Berlin, Vienna, Paris, or even London. He had been to Kiev, though, but only once, as a young boy. His father, a *melamed,* had traveled there on a tutoring job and had taken him along. In Kiev they lived in the cellar of a big house owned by rich Jews, the Kirilovs. They had been born Katz, but Russified their name. Every morning he and his father would go up a green staircase to the kitchen for a breakfast of coffee and stale bread and then into the schoolroom to teach *chumash* to Alexei Kirilov, a red-cheeked little boy. The younger Edelshtein would drill him while his father dozed. What had become of Alexei Kirilov? Edelshtein, a widower in New York, sixty-seven years old, a Yiddishist (so-called), a poet, could stare at anything at all—a subway car-card, a garbage-can lid, a streetlight—and cause the return of Alexei Kirilov's face, his bright cheeks, his Ukraine-accented Yiddish, his shelves of mechanical toys from Germany—trucks, cranes, wheelbarrows, little colored autos with awnings overhead. Only Edelshtein's father was expected to call him Alexei—everyone else, including the young Edelshtein, said Avremeleh. Avremeleh had a knack of getting things by heart. He had a golden head. Today he was a citizen of the Soviet Union. Or was he finished, dead, in the ravine at Babi Yar? Edelshtein remembered every coveted screw of the German toys. With his father he left Kiev in the spring and returned to Minsk. The mud, frozen into peaks, was melting. The train-carriage reeked of urine and the dirt seeped through their shoelaces into their socks.

And the language was lost, murdered. The language—a museum. Of what other language can it be said that it died a sudden and definite death, in a given decade, on a given piece of soil? Where are the speakers of ancient Etruscan? Who was the last man to write a poem in Linear B? Attrition, assimilation. Death by mystery not gas. The last Etruscan walks around inside some Sicilian. Western Civilization, that pod of muck, lingers on and on. The Sick Man of Europe with his big globe-head, rotting, but at home in bed. Yiddish, a littleness, a tiny light—oh little holy light!—dead, vanished. Perished. Sent into darkness.

This was Edelshtein's subject. On this subject he lectured for a living. He swallowed scraps. Synagogues, community centers, labor unions underpaid him to suck on the bones of the dead. Smoke. He traveled from borough to borough, suburb to suburb, mourning in English the death of Yiddish. Sometimes he tried to read one or two of his poems. At the first Yiddish word the painted old ladies of the Reform Temples would begin to titter from shame, as at a stand-up television comedian. Orthodox and Conservative men fell instantly asleep. So he reconsidered, and told jokes:

> Before the war there was held a great International Esperanto Convention. It met in Geneva. Esperanto scholars, doctors of letters, learned men, came from all over the world to deliver papers on the genesis, syntax, and functionalism of Esperanto. Some spoke of the social value of an international language, others of its beauty. Every nation on earth was represented

CYNTHIA OZICK has published short fiction and poetry in various periodicals. Her novel, *Trust,* has recently been reissued by Signet. The present story will appear in a collection entitled *The Pagan Rabbi,* to be published by Harper & Row.

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among the lecturers. All the papers were given in Esperanto. Finally the meeting was concluded, and the tired great men wandered companionably along the corridors, where at last they began to converse casually among themselves in their international language: *"Nu, vos macht a yid?"*

After the war a funeral cortège was moving slowly down a narrow street on the Lower East Side. The cars had left the parking lot behind the chapel in the Bronx and were on their way to the cemetery in Staten Island. Their route took them past the newspaper offices of the last Yiddish daily left in the city. There were two editors, one to run the papers off the press and the other to look out the window. The one looking out the window saw the funeral procession passing by and called to his colleague: "Hey Mottel, print one less!"

But both Edelshtein and his audiences found the jokes worthless. Old jokes. They were not the right kind. They wanted jokes about weddings—spiral staircases, doves flying out of cages, bashful medical students—and he gave them funerals. To speak of Yiddish was to preside over a funeral. He was a rabbi who had survived his whole congregation. Those for whom his tongue was no riddle were specters.

The new Temples scared Edelshtein. He was afraid to use the word *shul* in these palaces—inside, vast mock-bronze Tablets, mobiles of outstretched hands rotating on a motor, gigantic dangling Tetragrammatons in transparent plastic like chandeliers, platforms, altars, daises, pulpits, aisles, pews, polished-oak bins for prayerbooks printed in English with made-up new prayers in them. Everything smelled of wet plaster. Everything was new. The refreshment tables were long and luminous—he saw glazed cakes, snowheaps of egg salad, herring, salmon, tuna, whitefish, gefillte fish, pools of sour cream, silver electric coffee urns, bowls of lemon-slices, pyramids of bread, waferlike teacups from the Black Forest, Indian-brass trays of hard cheeses, golden bottles set up in rows like nine-pins, great sculptured butter-birds, Hansel-and-Gretel houses of cream cheese and fruitcake, bars, butlers, fat napery, carpeting deep as honey. He learned their term for their architecture: "soaring." In one place—a flat wall of beige brick in Westchester—he read Scripture riveted on in letters fashioned from 14-karat gold molds: "And thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen." Later that night he spoke in Mount Vernon, and in the marble lobby afterward he heard an adolescent girl mimic his inflections. It amazed him: often he forgot he had an accent. In the train going back to Manhattan he slid into a miniature jogging doze—it was a little nest of sweetness there inside the flaps of his overcoat, and he dreamed he was in Kiev, with his father. He looked through the open schoolroom door at the smoking cheeks of Alexei Kirilov, eight years old. "Avremeleh," he called, "Avremeleh, *kum tsu mir, lebst ts' geshtorben*?" He heard himself yelling in English: Thou shalt see my asshole! A belch woke him to hot fear. He was afraid he might be, unknown to himself all his life long, a secret pederast.

He had no children and only a few remote relations (a druggist cousin in White Plains, a cleaning store in-law hanging on somewhere among the blacks in Brownsville), so he loitered often in Baumzweig's apartment—dirty mirrors and rusting crystal, a hazard and invitation to cracks, an abandoned exhausted corridor. Lives had passed through it and were gone. Watching Baumzweig and his wife—gray-eyed, sluggish, with a plump Polish nose—it came to him that at this age, his own and theirs, it was the same having children or not having them. Baumzweig had two sons, one married and a professor at San Diego, the other at Stanford, not yet thirty, in love with his car. The San Diego son had a son. Sometimes it seemed that it must be in deference to his childlessness that Baumzweig and his wife pretended a detachment from their offspring. The grandson's photo—a fat-lipped blond child of three or so—was wedged between two wine glasses on top of the china closet. But then it became plain that they could not imagine the lives of their children. Nor could the children imagine their lives. The parents were too helpless to explain, the sons were too impatient to explain. So they had given each other up to a common muteness. In that apartment Josh and Mickey had grown up answering in English the Yiddish of their parents. Mutes. Mutations. What right had these boys to spit out the Yiddish that had bred them, and only for the sake of Western Civilization? Edelshtein knew the titles of their PhD theses: literary boys, one was on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the other was on the novels of Carson McCullers.

Baumzweig's lethargic wife was intelligent. She told Edelshtein he too had a child, also a son. "Yourself, yourself," she said. "You remember yourself when you were a little boy, and *that* little boy is the one you love, *him* you trust, *him* you bless, *him* you bring up in hope to a good manhood." She spoke a rich Yiddish, but high-pitched.

Baumzweig had a good job, a sinecure, a pension in disguise, with an office, a part-time secretary, a typewriter with Hebrew characters, ten-to-three hours. In 1910 a laxative manufacturer—a philanthropist—had founded an organization called the Yiddish-American Alliance for Letters and Social Progress. The original illustrious members were all dead—even the famous poet Yehoash was said to have paid dues for a month or so—but there was a trust providing for the group's continuation, and enough money to pay for a biannual periodical in Yiddish. Baumzweig was the

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editor of this, but of the Alliance nothing was left, only some crumbling brown snapshots of Jews in derbies. His salary check came from the laxative manufacturer's grandson—a Republican politician, an Episcopalian. The name of the celebrated product was LUKEWARM: it was advertised as delightful to children when dissolved in lukewarm cocoa. The name of the obscure periodical was *Bitterer Yam*, Bitter Sea, but it had so few subscribers that Baumzweig's wife called it Invisible Ink. In it Baumzweig published much of his own poetry and a little of Edelshtein's. Baumzweig wrote mostly of Death, Edelshtein mostly of Love. They were both sentimentalists, but not about each other. They did not like each other, though they were close friends.

Sometimes they read aloud among the dust of empty bowls their newest poems, with an agreement beforehand not to criticize: Paula should be the critic. Carrying coffee back and forth in cloudy glasses, Baumzweig's wife said: "Oh, very nice, very nice. But so sad. Gentlemen, life is not that sad." After this she would always kiss Edelshtein on the forehead, a lazy kiss, often leaving stuck on his eyebrow a crumb of Danish: very slightly she was a slattern.

EDELSHTEIN's friendship with Baumzweig had a ferocious secret: it was moored entirely to their agreed hatred for the man they called *der chazer*. He was named Pig because of his extraordinarily white skin, like a tissue of pale ham, and also because in the last decade he had become unbelievably famous. When they did not call him Pig they called him *shed*—Devil. They also called him Yankee Doodle. His name was Yankel Ostrover, and he was a writer of stories.

They hated him for the amazing thing that had happened to him—his fame—but this they never referred to. Instead they discussed his style: his Yiddish was impure, his sentences lacked grace and sweep, his paragraph transitions were amateur, vile. Or else they raged against his subject-matter, which was insanely sexual, pornographic, paranoid, freakish—men who embraced men, women who caressed women, sodomists of every variety, boys copulating with hens, butchers who drank blood for strength behind the knife. All the stories were set in an imaginary Polish village, Zwrdl, and by now there was almost no American literary intellectual alive who had not learned to say Zwrdl when he meant lewd. Ostrover's wife was reputed to be a high-born Polish Gentile woman from the "real" Zwrdl, the daughter in fact of a minor princeling, who did not know a word of Yiddish and read her husband's fiction falteringly, in English translation—but both Edelshtein and Baumzweig had encountered her often enough over the years, at this meeting and that, and regarded her as no more impressive than a pot of stale fish. Her Yiddish had an unpleasant gargling Galician accent, her vocabulary was a thin soup—they joked that it was correct to say she spoke no Yiddish—and she mewed it like a peasant, comparing prices. She was a short square woman, a cube with low-slung udders and a flat backside. It was partly Ostrover's mockery, partly his self-advertising, that had converted her into a little princess. He would make her go into their bedroom to get a whip he claimed she had used on her bay, Romeo, trotting over her father's lands in her girlhood. Baumzweig often said this same whip was applied to the earlobes of Ostrover's translators, unhappy pairs of collaborators he changed from month to month, never satisfied.

Ostrover's glory was exactly in this: that he required translators. Though he wrote only in Yiddish, his fame was American, national, international. They considered him a "modern." Ostrover was free of the prison of Yiddish! Out, out—he had burst out, he was in the world of reality.

And how had he begun? The same as anybody, a columnist for one of the Yiddish dailies, a humorist, a cheap fast article-writer, a squeezer-out of real-life tales. Like anybody else, he saved up a few dollars, put a paper clip over his stories, and hired a Yiddish press to print up a hundred copies. A book. Twenty-five copies he gave to people he counted as relatives, another twenty-five he sent to enemies and rivals, the rest he kept under his bed in the original cartons. Like anybody else, his literary gods were Chekhov and Tolstoy, Peretz and Sholem Aleichem. From this, how did he come to the *New Yorker*, to *Playboy*, to big lecture fees, invitations to Yale and M.I.T. and Vassar, to the Midwest, to Buenos Aires, to a literary agent, to a publisher on Madison Avenue?

"He sleeps with the right translators," Paula said. Edelshtein gave out a whinny. He knew some of Ostrover's translators—a spinster hack in dresses below the knee, occasionally a certain half-mad and drunken lexicographer, college boys with a dictionary.

Thirty years ago, straight out of Poland via Tel Aviv, Ostrover crept into a toying affair with Mireleh, Edelshtein's wife. He had left Palestine during the 1939 Arab riots, not, he said, out of fear, out of integrity rather—it was a country which had turned its face against Yiddish. Yiddish was not honored in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. In the Negev it was worthless. In the God-given State of Israel they had no use for the language of the bad little interval between Canaan and now. Yiddish was inhabited by the past, the new Jews did not want it. Mireleh liked to hear these anecdotes of how rotten it was in Israel for Yiddish and Yiddishists. In Israel the case was even lamer than in New York, thank God! There was after all a reason to live the life they lived: it was worse somewhere else. Mireleh was a tragedian. She carried herself according to her impression

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of how a barren woman should sit, squat, stand, eat and sleep, talked constantly of her six miscarriages, and was vindictive about Edelshtein's sperm-count. Ostrover would arrive in the rain, crunch down on the sofa, complain about the transportation from the Bronx to the West Side, and begin to woo Mireleh. He took her out to supper, to his special café, to Second Avenue vaudeville, even home to his apartment near Crotona Park to meet his little princess Pesha. Edelshtein noticed with self-curiosity that he felt no jealousy whatever, but he thought himself obliged to throw a kitchen chair at Ostrover. Ostrover had very fine teeth, his own; the chair knocked off half a lateral incisor, and Edelshtein wept at the flaw. Immediately he led Ostrover to the dentist around the corner.

The two wives, Mireleh and Pesha, seemed to be falling in love: they had dates, they went to museums and movies together, they poked one another and laughed day and night, they shared little privacies, they carried pencilbox rulers in their purses and showed each other certain hilarious measurements, they even became pregnant in the same month. Pesha had her third daughter, Mireleh her seventh miscarriage. Edelshtein was griefstricken but elated. "*My* sperm-count?" he screamed. "*Your* belly! Go fix the machine before you blame the oil!" When the dentist's bill came for Ostrover's jacket crown, Edelshtein sent it to Ostrover. At this injustice Ostrover dismissed Mireleh and forbade Pesha to go anywhere with her ever again.

About Mireleh's affair with Ostrover Edelshtein wrote the following malediction:

You, why do you snuff out my sons, my daughters?
Worse than Mother Eve, cursed to break waters for little ones to float out upon in their tiny barks of skin,
you, merciless one, cannot even bear the fruit of sin.

It was published to much gossip in *Bitterer Yam* in the spring of that year—one point at issue being whether "snuff out" was the right term in such a watery context. (Baumzweig, a less oblique stylist, had suggested "drown.") The late Zimmerman, Edelshtein's cruelest rival, wrote in a letter to Baumzweig (which Baumzweig read on the telephone to Edelshtein):

> Who is the merciless one, after all, the barren woman who makes the house peaceful with no infantile caterwauling, or the excessively fertile poet who bears the fruit of his sin—namely his untalented verses? He bears it, but who can bear it? In one breath he runs from seas to trees. Like his ancestors the amphibians, puffed up with arrogance. Hersheleh Frog! Why did God give Hersheleh Edelshtein an unfaithful wife? To punish him for writing trash.

Around the same time Ostrover wrote a story: two women loved each other so much they mourned because they could not give birth to one another's children. Both had husbands, one virile and hearty, the other impotent, with a withered organ, a *shlimazl*. They seized the idea of making a tool out of one of the husbands: they agreed to transfer their love for each other into the man, and bear the child of their love through him. So both women turned to the virile husband, and both women conceived. But the woman who had the withered husband could not bear her child: it withered in her womb. "As it is written," Ostrover concluded, "Paradise is only for those who have already been there."

A STUPID FABLE! Three decades later—Mireleh dead of a cancerous uterus, Pesha encrusted with royal lies in *Time* magazine (which photographed the whip)—this piece of insignificant mystification, this *pollution*, included also in Ostrover's *Complete Tales* (Kimmel & Segal, 1968), was the subject of graduate dissertations in comparative literature, as if Ostrover were Thomas Mann, or even Albert Camus. When all that happened was that Pesha and Mireleh had gone to the movies together now and then—and such a long time ago! All the same, Ostrover was released from the dungeon of the dailies, from *Bitterer Yam* and even seedier nullities, he was free, the outside world knew his name. And why Ostrover? Why not somebody else? Was Ostrover more gifted than Komorsky? Did he think up better stories than Horowitz? Why does the world outside pick on an Ostrover instead of an Edelshtein or even a Baumzweig? What occult knack, what craft, what crooked convergence of planets drove translators to grovel before Ostrover's naked swollen sentences with their thin little threadbare pants always pulled down? Who had discovered that Ostrover was a "modern"? His Yiddish, however fevered on itself, bloated, was still Yiddish, it was still *mamaloshen*, it still squeaked up to God with a littleness, a familiarity, an elbow-poke, it was still pieced together out of *shtetl* rags, out of a baby *aleph*, a toddler *beys*—so why Ostrover? Why only Ostrover? Ostrover should be the only one? Everyone else sentenced to darkness, Ostrover alone saved? Ostrover the survivor? As if hidden in the Dutch attic like that child. *His* diary, so to speak, the only documentation of what was. Like Ringelblum of Warsaw. Ostrover was to be the only evidence that there was once a Yiddish tongue, a Yiddish literature? And all the others lost? Lost! Drowned. Snuffed out. Under the earth. As if never.

Edelshtein composed a letter to Ostrover's publishers:

> Kimmel & Segal
> 244 Madison Avenue, New York City
>
> My dear Mr. Kimmel, and very honored Mr. Segal:

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I am writing to you in reference to one Y. Ostrover, whose works you are the company that places them before the public's eyes. Be kindly enough to forgive all flaws of English Expression. Undoubtedly, in the course of his business with you, you have received from Y. Ostrover, letters in English, even worse than this. (I HAVE NO TRANSLATOR!) We immigrants, no matter how long already Yankified, stay inside always green and never attain to actual native writing Smoothness. For one million green writers, one Nabokov, one Kosinski. I mention these to show my extreme familiarness with American Literature in all Contemporaneous avatars. In your language I read, let us say, wolfishly. I regard myself as a very Keen critic, esp. concerning so-called Amer.-Jewish writers. If you would give time I could willingly explain to you many clear opinions I have concerning these Jewish-Amer. boys and girls such as (not alphabetical) Roth Philip/ Rosen Norma/ Melammed Bernie/ Friedman B.J./ Paley Grace/ Bellow Saul/ Mailer Norman. Of the latter having just read several recent works including political I would like to remind him what F. Kafka, rest in peace, said to the German-speaking, already very comfortable, Jews of Prague, Czechoslovakia: "Jews of Prague! You know more Yiddish than you think!"

Perhaps, since doubtless you do not read the Jewish Press, you are not informed. Only this month all were taken by surprise! In that filthy propaganda *Sovietishe Heymland* which in Russia they run to show that their prisoners the Jews are not prisoners—a poem! By a 20-year-old young Russian Jewish girl! Yiddish will yet live through our young. Though I doubt it as do other pessimists. However, this is not the point! I ask you—what does the following personages mean to you, you who are Sensitive men, Intelligent, and with closely-warmed Feelings! Lyessin, Yehoash! H. Leivik himself! Itzik Manger, Chaim Grade, Jacob Glatshtein, Eliezer Greenberg! Dovid Ignatov, Morris Rosenfeld, Moishe Nadir, Moishe Leib Halpern, Reuven Eisland, Mani Leib, Zisha Landau! I ask you! Frug, Peretz, Vintchevski, Bovshover, Edelshtat! Velvl Zhbarzher, Avrom Goldfaden! A. Rosenblatt! Y.Y. Schwartz, Yoisef Rollnick! These are all our glorious Yiddish poets. And if I would add to them our beautiful recent Russian brother-poets that were killed by Stalin with his pockmarks, for instance Peretz Markish, would you know any name of theirs? No! THEY HAVE NO TRANSLATORS!

Esteemed Gentlemen, you publish only one Yiddish writer, not even a Poet, only a Story-writer. I humbly submit you give serious wrong Impressions. That we have produced nothing else. I again refer to your associate Y. Ostrover. I do not intend to take away from him any possible talent by this letter, but I wish to WITH VIGOROUSNESS assure you that others also exist without notice being bothered over them! I myself am the author and also publisher of four tomes of poetry: *N'shomeh un Guf, Zingen un Freyen, A Velt ohn Vint, A Shtundeh mit Shney.* To wit, "Soul and Body," "Singing and Being Happy," "A World with no Wind," "An Hour of Snow," these are my Deep-Feeling titles.

Please inform me if you will be willing to provide me with a translator for these very worthwhile pieces of hidden writings, or, to use a Hebrew Expression, "Buried Light."

Yours very deeply respectful.

He received an answer in the same week.

Dear Mr. Edelstein:

Thank you for your interesting and informative letter. We regret that, unfortunately, we cannot furnish you with a translator. Though your poetry may well be of the quality you claim for it, practically speaking, reputation must precede translation.

Yours sincerely.

A lie! Liars!

Dear Kimmel, dear Segal,

Did you, Jews without tongues, ever hear of Ostrover before you found him translated everywhere? In Yiddish he didn't exist for you! For you Yiddish has no existence! A darkness inside a cloud! Who can see it, who can hear it? The world has no ears for the prisoner! You sign yourself "Yours." You're not mine and I'm not Yours!

Sincerely.

He then began to search in earnest for a translator. Expecting little, he wrote to the spinster hack.

Esteemed Edelshtein [she replied]:

To put it as plainly as I can—a plain woman should be as plain in her words—you do not know the world of practicality, of reality. Why should you? You're a poet, an idealist. When a big magazine pays Ostrover $500, how much do I get? Maybe $75. If he takes a rest for a month and doesn't write, what then? Since he's the only one they want to print he's the only one worth translating. Suppose I translated one of your nice little love songs? Would anyone buy it? Foolishness even to ask. And if they bought it, should I slave for the $5? You don't know what I go through with Ostrover anyhow. He sits me down in his dining room, his wife brings in a samovar of tea—did you ever hear anything as pretentious as this—and sits also, watching me. She has jealous eyes. She watches my ankles, which aren't bad. Then we begin. Ostrover reads aloud the first sentence the way he wrote it, in Yiddish. I write it down, in English. Right away it starts. Pesha reads what I put down and says, "That's no good, you don't catch his idiom." Idiom! She knows! Ostrover says, "The last word sticks in my throat. Can't you do better than that? A little more robustness." We look in the dictionary, the thesaurus, we scream out different words,

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trying, trying. Ostrover doesn't like any of them. Suppose the word is "big." We go through huge, vast, gigantic, enormous, gargantuan, monstrous, etc., etc., etc., and finally Ostrover says—by now it's five hours later, my tonsils hurt, I can hardly stand—"all right, so let it be 'big.' Simplicity above all." Day after day like this! And for $75 is it worth it? Then after this he fires me and gets himself a college boy! Or that imbecile who cracked up over the mathematics dictionary! Until he needs me. However I get a little glory out of it. Everyone says, "There goes Ostrover's translator." In actuality I'm his pig, his stool (I mean that in both senses, I assure you). You write that he has no talent. That's your opinion, maybe you're not wrong, but let me tell you he has a talent for pressure. The way among *them* they write careless novels, hoping they'll be transformed into beautiful movies—that's how it is with him. Never mind the quality of his Yiddish, what will it turn into when it becomes English? Transformation is all he cares for—and in English he's a cripple—like, please excuse me, yourself and everyone of your generation. But Ostrover has the sense to be a suitor. He keeps all his translators in a perpetual frenzy of envy for each other, but they're just rubble and offal to him, they aren't the object of his suit. What he woos is *them*. Them! You understand me, Edelshtein? He stands on the backs of hacks to reach. I know you call me hack, and it's all right, by myself I'm what you think me, no imagination, so-so ability (I too once wanted to be a poet, but that's another life)—with Ostrover on my back I'm something else: I'm "Ostrover's translator." You think that's nothing? It's an entrance into *them*. I'm invited everywhere, I go to the same parties Ostrover goes to. Everyone looks at me and thinks I'm a bit freakish, but they say: "It's Ostrover's translator." A marriage. Pesha, that junk-heap, is less married to Ostrover than I am. Like a wife, I have the supposedly passive role. Supposedly: who knows what goes on in the bedroom? An unmarried person like myself becomes good at guessing at these matters. The same with translation. Who makes the language Ostrover is famous for? You ask: what has persuaded *them* that he's a "so-called modern"?—a sneer. Aha. *Who* has read James Joyce, Ostrover or I? I'm fifty-three years old. I wasn't born back of Hlusk for nothing, I didn't go to Vassar for nothing—do you understand me? I got caught in between, so I got squeezed. Between two organisms. A cultural hermaphrodite, neither one nor the other. I have a forked tongue. When I fight for five hours to make Ostrover say "big" instead of "gargantuan," when I take out all the nice homey commas he sprinkles like a fool, when I drink his wife's stupid tea and then go home with a watery belly—*then* he's being turned into a "modern," you see? I'm the one! No one recognizes this, of course, they think it's something inside the stories themselves, when actually it's the way I dress them up and paint over them. It's all cosmetics, I'm a cosmetician, a painter, the one they pay to do the same job on the corpse in the mortuary, among *them* . . . don't, though, bore me with your criticisms. I tell you his Yiddish doesn't matter. Nobody's Yiddish matters. Whatever's in Yiddish doesn't matter.

The rest of the letter—all women are long-winded, strong-minded—he did not read. He had already seen what she was after: a little bit of money, a little bit of esteem. A miniature megalomaniac: she fancied herself the *real* Ostrover. She believed she had fashioned herself a genius out of a rag. A rag turned into a sack, was that genius? She lived out there in the light, with *them*: naturally she wouldn't waste her time on an Edelshtein. In the bleakness. Dark where he was. An idealist! How had this good word worked itself up in society to become an insult? A darling word nevertheless. Idealist. The difference between him and Ostrover was this: Ostrover wanted to save only himself, Edelshtein wanted to save Yiddish.

Immediately he felt he lied.

With Baumzweig and Paula he went to the Ninety-Second Street Y to hear Ostrover read. "Self-mortification," Paula said of this excursion. It was a snowy night. They had to shove their teeth into the wind, tears of suffering iced down their cheeks, the streets from the subway were Siberia. "Two Christian saints, self-flagellation," she muttered, "with chains of icicles they hit themselves." They paid for the tickets with numb fingers and sat down toward the front. Edelshtein felt paralyzed. His toes stung, prickled, then seemed diseased, gangrenous, furnace-like. The cocoon of his bed at home, the pen he kept on his nighttable, the first luminous line of his new poem lying there waiting to be born—*Oh that I might like a youth be struck with the blow of belief*—all at once he knew how to go on with it, what it was about and what he meant by it, the hall around him seemed preposterous, unnecessary, why was he here? Crowds, huddling, the whine of folding chairs lifted and dropped, the babble, Paula yawning next to him with squeezed and wrinkled eyelids, Baumzweig blowing his flat nose into a blue plaid handkerchief and exploding a great green flower of snot, why was he in such a place as this? What did such a place have in common with what he knew, what he felt?

Paula craned around her short neck inside a used-up skunk collar to read the frieze, mighty names, golden letters, Moses, Einstein, Maimonides, Heine. Heine. Maybe Heine knew what Edelshtein knew, a convert. But these, ushers in fine jackets, skinny boys carrying books (Ostrover's), wearing them nearly, costumed for blatant bookishness, blatant sexuality, in pants crotch-snug, pencilling buttocks on air, mustachioed, some hairy to the collarbone, shins and calves

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menacing as hammers, and girls, tunics, knees, pants, boots, little hidden sweet tongues, black-eyed. Woolly smell of piles and piles of coats. For Ostrover! The hall was full, the ushers with raised tweed wrists directed all the rest into an unseen gallery nearby: a television screen there, on which the little gray ghost of Ostrover, palpable and otherwise white as a washed pig, would soon flutter. The Y. Why? Edelshtein also lectured at Y's—Elmhurst, Eastchester, Rye, tiny platforms, lecterns too tall for him, catalogues of vexations, his sad recitations to old people. Ladies and Gentlemen, they have cut out my vocal cords, the only language I can freely and fluently address you in, my darling *mamaloshen*, surgery, dead, the operation was a success. Edelshtein's Y's were all old people's homes, convalescent factories, asylums. To himself he sang,

Why	*Farvos di Vy?*
the Y?	*Ich reyd*
Lectures	*ohn freyd*
to specters,	*un sheydim tantsen derbei,*

aha! specters, if my tongue has no riddle for you, Ladies and Gentlemen, you are specter, wraith, phantom, I have invented you, you are my imagining, there is no one here at all, an empty chamber, a vacant valve, abandoned, desolate. Everyone gone. *Pust vi dem kalten shul mein harts* (another first line left without companion-lines, fellows, followers), the cold study-house, spooks dance there. Ladies and Gentlemen, if you find my tongue a riddle, here is another riddle: How is a Jew like a giraffe? A Jew too has no vocal cords. God blighted Jew and giraffe, one in full, one by half. And no salve. Baumzweig hawked up again. Mucus the sheen of the sea. In God's Creation no thing without beauty however perverse. *Khrakeh khrakeh.* Baumzweig's roar the only noise in the hall. "Shah," Paula said, "*ot kumt der shed.*"

Gleaming, gleaming, Ostrover stood—high, far, the stage broad, brilliant, the lectern punctilious with microphone and water-pitcher. A rod of powerful light bored into his eye-sockets. He had a moth-mouth as thin and dim as a chalk-line, a fence of white hair erect over his ears, a cool voice.

"A new story," he announced, and spittle flashed on his lip. "It isn't obscene, so I consider it a failure."

"Devil," Paula whispered, "washed white pig, Yankee Doodle."

"Shah," Baumzweig said, "*lomir heren.*"

Baumzweig wanted to hear the devil, the pig! Why should anyone want to hear him? Edelshtein, a little bit deaf, hung forward. Before him, his nose nearly in it, the hair of a young girl glistened—some of the stage light had become enmeshed in it. Young, young! Everyone young! Everyone for Ostrover young! A modern.

Cautiously, slyly, Edelshtein let out, as on a rope, little bony shiverings of attentiveness. Two rows in front of him he glimpsed the spinster hack, Chaim Vorovsky the drunken lexicographer whom too much mathematics had crazed, six unknown college boys.

OSTROVER'S story:

Satan appears to a bad poet. "I desire fame," says the poet, "but I cannot attain it, because I come from Zwrdl, and the only language I can write is Zwrdlish. Unfortunately no one is left in the world who can read Zwrdlish. That is my burden. Give me fame, and I will trade you my soul for it."

"Are you quite sure," says Satan, "that you have estimated the dimensions of your trouble entirely correctly?" "What do you mean?" says the poet. "Perhaps," says Satan, "the trouble lies in your talent. Zwrdl or no Zwrdl, it's very weak." "Not so!" says the poet, "and I'll prove it to you. Teach me French, and in no time I'll be famous." "All right," says Satan, "as soon as I say Glup you'll know French perfectly, better than de Gaulle. But I'll be generous with you. French is such an easy language, I'll take only a quarter of your soul for it."

And he said Glup. And in an instant there was the poet, scribbling away in fluent French. But still no publisher in France wanted him and he remained obscure. Back came Satan: "So the French was no good, *mon vieux? Tant pis!*" "Feh," says the poet, "what do you expect from a people that kept colonies, they should know what's good in the poetry line? Teach me Italian, after all even the Pope dreams in Italian." "Another quarter of your soul," says Satan, ringing it up in his portable cash-register. And Glup! There he was again, the poet, writing *terza rima* with such fluency and melancholy that the Pope would have been moved to holy tears of praise if only he had been able to see it in print—unfortunately every publisher in Italy sent the manuscript back with a plain rejection slip, no letter.

"What? Italian no good either?" exclaims Satan. "*Mamma mia,* why don't you believe me, little brother, it's not the language, it's you." It was the same with Swahili and Armenian, Glup!—failure, Glup!—failure, and by now, having rung up a quarter of it at a time, Satan owned the poet's entire soul, and took him back with him to the Place of Fire. "I suppose you'll burn me up," says the poet bitterly. "No, no," says Satan, "we don't go in for that sort of treatment for so silken a creature as a poet. Well? Did you bring everything? I told you to pack carefully! Not to leave behind a scrap!" "I brought my whole file," says the poet, and sure enough, there it was, strapped to his back, a big black metal cabinet. "Now empty it into the Fire," Satan orders. "My poems! Not all my poems? My whole life's output?" cries the poet in anguish. "That's right, do as I say," and the poet obeys, because, after all, he's in hell and Satan owns him.

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"Good," says Satan, "now come with me, I'll show you to your room."

A perfect room, perfectly appointed, not too cold, not too hot, just the right distance from the great Fire to be comfortable. A jewel of a desk, with a red leather top, a lovely swivel chair cushioned in scarlet, a scarlet Persian rug on the floor, nearby a red refrigerator stocked with cheese and pudding and pickles, a glass of reddish tea already steaming on a little red table. One window without a curtain. "That's your Inspiring View," says Satan, "look out and see." Nothing outside but the Fire cavorting splendidly, flecked with unearthly colors, turning itself and rolling up into unimaginable new forms. "It's beautiful," marvels the poet. "Exactly," says Satan. "It should inspire you to the composition of many new verses." "Yes, yes! May I begin, your Lordship?" "That's why I brought you here," says Satan. "Now sit down and write, since you can't help it anyhow. There is only one stipulation. The moment you finish a stanza you must throw it out of the window, like this." And to illustrate, he tossed out a fresh page.

Instantly a flaming wind picked it up and set it afire, drawing it into the great central conflagration. "Remember that you are in hell," Satan says sternly, "here you write only for oblivion." The poet begins to weep. "No difference, no difference! It was the same up there! O Zwrdl, I curse you that you nurtured me!" "And still he doesn't see the point!" says Satan, exasperated. "Glup glup glup glup glup glup glup! Now write." The poor poet began to scribble, one poem after another, and lo! suddenly he forgot every word of Zwrdlish he ever knew, faster and faster he wrote, he held on to the pen as if it alone kept his legs from flying off on their own, he wrote in Dutch and in English, in German and in Turkish, in Santali and in Sassak, in Lapp and in Kurdish, in Welsh and in Rhaeto-Romanic, in Niasese and in Nicobarese, in Galcha and in Ibanag, in Ho and in Khmer, in Ro and in Volapük, in Jagatai and in Swedish, in Tulu and in Russian, in Irish and in Kalmuck! He wrote in every language but Zwrdlish, and every poem he wrote he had to throw out the window because it was trash anyhow, though he did not realize it. . . .

EDELSHTEIN, spinning off into a furious and alien meditation, was not sure how the story ended. But it was brutal, and Satan was again in the ascendancy: he whipped down aspiration with one of Ostrover's sample aphorisms, dense and swollen as a phallus, but sterile all the same. The terrifying laughter, a sea-wave all around: it broke toward Edelshtein, meaning to lash him to bits. Laughter for Ostrover. Little jokes, little jokes, all they wanted was jokes! "Baumzweig," he said, pressing himself down across Paula's collar (under it her plump breasts), "he does it for spite, you see that?"

But Baumzweig was caught in the laughter. The edges of his mouth were beaten by it. He whirled in it like a bug. "Bastard!" he said.

"Bastard," Edelshtein said reflectively.

"He means *you*," Baumzweig said.

"Me?"

"An allegory. You see how everything fits. . . ."

"If you write letters, you shouldn't mail them," Paula said reasonably. "It got back to him you're looking for a translator."

"He doesn't need a muse, he needs a butt. Naturally it got back to him," Baumzweig said. "That witch herself told him."

"Why me?" Edelshtein said. "It could be you."

"I'm not a jealous type," Baumzweig protested. "What he has you want." He waved over the audience: just then he looked as insignificant as a little bird.

Paula said, "You both want it."

What they both wanted now began. Homage.

Q. Mr. Ostrover, what would you say is the symbolic weight of this story?

A. The symbolic weight is, what you need you deserve. If you don't need to be knocked on the head you'll never deserve it.

Q. Sir, I'm writing a paper on you for my English class. Can you tell me please if you believe in hell?

A. Not since I got rich.

Q. How about God? Do you believe in God?

A. Exactly the way I believe in pneumonia. If you have pneumonia, you have it. If you don't, you don't.

Q. Is it true your wife is a Countess? Some people say she's really only Jewish.

A. In religion she's a transvestite, and in actuality she's a Count.

Q. Is there really such a language as Zwrdlish?

A. You're speaking it right now, it's the language of fools.

Q. What would happen if you weren't translated into English?

A. The pygmies and the Eskimos would read me instead. Nowadays to be Ostrover is to be a worldwide industry.

Q. Then why don't you write about worldwide things like wars?

A. Because I'm afraid of loud noises.

Q. What do you think of the future of Yiddish?

A. What do you think of the future of the Doberman pinscher?

Q. People say other Yiddishists envy you.

A. No, it's I who envy them. I like a quiet life.

Q. Do you keep the Sabbath?

A. Of course, didn't you notice it's gone?—I keep it hidden.

Q. And the dietary laws? Do you observe them?

A. Because of the moral situation of the world

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I have to. I was heartbroken to learn that the minute an oyster enters my stomach, he becomes an anti-Semite. A bowl of shrimp once started a pogrom against my intestines.

JOKES, JOKES! It looked to go on for another hour. The condition of fame, a Question Period: a man can stand up forever and dribble shallow quips and everyone admires him for it. Edelshtein threw up his seat with a squeal and sneaked up the aisle to the double doors and into the lobby. On a bench, half-asleep, he saw the lexicographer. Usually he avoided him—he was a man with a past, all pasts are boring—but when he saw Vorovsky raise his leathery eyelids he went toward him.

"What's new, Chaim?"

"Nothing. Liver pains. And you?"

"Life pains. I saw you inside."

"I walked out, I hate the young."

"You weren't young, no."

"Not like these. I never laughed. Do you realize, at the age of twelve I had already mastered calculus? I practically reinvented it on my own. You haven't read Wittgenstein, Hersheleh, what do you know about the empire of the universe?"

Edelshtein thought to deflect him: "Was it your translation he read in there?"

"Did it sound like mine?"

"I couldn't tell."

"It was and it wasn't. Mine, improved. If you ask that ugly one, she'll say it's hers, improved. Who's really Ostrover's translator? Tell me, Hersheleh, maybe it's you. Nobody knows. It's as they say—by several hands, and all the hands are in Ostrover's pot, burning up. I would like to make a good strong b.m. on your friend Ostrover."

"*My* friend? He's not my friend."

"So why did you pay genuine money to see him? You can see him for free somewhere else, no?"

"The same applies to yourself."

"Youth, I brought youth."

A conversation with a madman: Vorovsky's *meshugas* was to cause other people to suspect him of normality. Edelshtein let himself slide to the bench—he felt his bones accordian downward. He was in the grip of a mournful fatigue. Sitting eye to eye with Vorovsky he confronted the other's hat—a great Russian-style fur monster. A nimbus of droshky-bells surrounded it, shrouds of snow. Vorovsky had a big head, with big kneaded features, except for the nose, which looked like a doll's, pink and formlessly delicate. The only sign of drunkenness was at the bulbs of the nostrils, where the cartilage was swollen, and at the tip, also swollen. Of actual madness there was, in ordinary discourse, no sign, except a tendency toward elusiveness. But it was known that Vorovsky, after compiling his dictionary, a job of seventeen years, one afternoon suddenly began to laugh, and continued laughing for six months, even in his sleep: in order to rest from laughing he had to be given sedatives, though even these could not entirely suppress his laughter. His wife died, and then his father, and he went on laughing. He lost control of his bladder, and then discovered the curative potency, for laughter, of drink. Drink cured him, but he still peed publicly, without realizing it; and even his cure was tentative and unreliable, because if he happened to hear a joke that he liked he might laugh at it for a minute or two, or, on occasion, three hours. Apparently none of Ostrover's jokes had struck home with him—he was sober and desolate-looking. Nevertheless Edelshtein noticed a large dark patch near his fly. He had wet himself, it was impossible to tell how long ago. There was no odor. Edelshtein moved his buttocks back an inch. "Youth?" he inquired.

"My niece. Twenty-three years old, my sister Ida's girl. She reads Yiddish fluently," he said proudly. "She writes."

"In Yiddish?"

"Yiddish," he spat out. "Don't be crazy, Hersheleh, who writes in Yiddish? Twenty-three years old, she should write in Yiddish? What is she, a refugee, an American girl like that? She's crazy for literature, that's all, she's like the rest in there, to her Ostrover's literature. I brought her, she wanted to be introduced."

"Introduce me," Edelshtein said craftily.

"She wants to be introduced to someone famous, where do you come in?"

"Translated I'd be famous. Listen, Chaim, a talented man like you, so many languages under your belt, why don't you give me a try? A try and a push."

"I'm no good at poetry. You should write stories if you want fame."

"I don't want fame."

"Then what are you talking about?"

"I want—" Edelshtein stopped. What did he want? "To reach," he said.

Vorovsky did not laugh. "I was educated at the University of Berlin. From Vilna to Berlin, that was 1924. Did I reach Berlin? I gave my whole life to collecting a history of the human mind, I mean expressed in mathematics. In mathematics the final and only poetry possible. Did I reach the empire of the universe? Hersheleh, if I could tell you about reaching, I would tell you this: reaching is impossible. Why? Because when you get where you wanted to reach to, that's when you realize that's not what you want to reach to.—Do you know what a bilingual German-English mathematical dictionary is good for?"

Edelshtein covered his knees with his hands. His knuckles glimmered up at him. Row of white skulls.

"Toilet paper," Vorovsky said. "Do you know what poems are good for? The same. And don't call me cynic, what I say isn't cynicism."

"Despair maybe," Edelshtein offered.

"Despair up your ass. I'm a happy man. I

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know something about laughter." He jumped up —next to the seated Edelshtein he was a giant. Fists gray, thumbnails like bone. The mob was pouring out of the doors of the auditorium. "Something else I'll tell you. Translation is no equation. If you're looking for an equation, better die first. There are no equations, equations don't happen. It's an idea like a two-headed animal, you follow me? The last time I saw an equation it was in a snapshot of myself. I looked in my own eyes, and what did I see there? I saw God in the shape of a murderer. What you should do with your poems is swallow your tongue. There's my niece, behind Ostrover like a tail. Hey Yankel!" he boomed.

The great man did not hear. Hands, arms, heads enclosed him like a fisherman's net. Baumzweig and Paula paddled through eddies, the lobby swirled. Edelshtein saw two little people, elderly, overweight, heavily dressed. He hid himself, he wanted to be lost. Let them go, let them go—

But Paula spotted him. "What happened? We thought you took sick."

"It was too hot in there."

"Come home with us, there's a bed. Instead of your own place alone."

"Thank you no. He signs autographs, look at that."

"Your jealousy will eat you up, Hersheleh."

"I'm not jealous!" Edelshtein shrieked; people turned to see. "Where's Baumzweig?"

"Shaking hands with the pig. An editor has to keep up contacts."

"A poet has to keep down vomit."

Paula considered him. Her chin dipped into her skunk ruff. "How can you vomit, Hersheleh? Pure souls have no stomachs, only ectoplasm. Maybe Ostrover's right, you have too much ambition for your size. What if your dear friend Baumzweig didn't publish you? You wouldn't know your own name. My husband doesn't mention this to you, he's a kind man, but I'm not afraid of the truth. Without him you wouldn't exist."

"With him I don't exist," Edelshtein said. "What is existence?"

"I'm not a Question Period," Paula said.

"That's all right," Edelshtein said, "because I'm an Answer Period. The answer is period. Your husband is finished, period. Also I'm finished, period. We're already dead. Whoever uses Yiddish to keep himself alive is already dead. Either you realize this or you don't realize it. I'm one who realizes."

"I tell him all the time he shouldn't bother with you. You come and you hang around."

"Your house is a gallows, mine is a gas chamber, what's the difference?"

"Don't come any more, nobody needs you."

"My philosophy exactly. We are superfluous on the face of the earth."

"You're a scoundrel."

"Your husband's a weasel, and you're the wife of a weasel."

"Pig and devil yourself."

"Mother of puppydogs." (Paula, such a good woman, the end, he would never see her again!)

He blundered away licking his tears, hitting shoulders with his shoulder, blind with the accident of his grief. A yearning all at once shouted itself in his brain:

Edelshtein: Chaim, teach me to be a drunk!
Vorovsky: First you need to be crazy.
Edelshtein: Teach me to go crazy!
Vorovsky: First you need to fail.
Edelshtein: I've failed, I'm schooled in failure, I'm a master of failure!
Vorovsky: Go back and study some more.

One wall was a mirror. In it he saw an old man crying, dragging a striped scarf like a prayer shawl. He stood and looked at himself. He wished he had been born a Gentile. Pieces of old poems littered his nostrils, he smelled the hour of their creation, his wife in bed beside him, asleep after he had rubbed her to compensate her for bitterness. *The sky is cluttered with stars of David. . . . If everything is something else, then I am something else. . . . Am I a thing and not a bird? Does my way fork though I am one? Will God take back history? Who will let me begin again. . . .*

Ostrover: Hersheleh, I admit I insulted you, but who will know? It's only a make-believe story, a game.
Edelshtein: Literature isn't a game! Literature isn't little stories!
Ostrover: So what is it, Torah? You scream out loud like a Jew, Edelshtein. Be quiet, they'll hear you.
Edelshtein: And you, Mr. Elegance, you aren't a Jew?
Ostrover: Not at all, I'm one of *them*. You too are lured, aren't you, Hersheleh? Shakespeare is better than a shadow, Pushkin is better than a pipsqueak, hah?
Edelshtein: If you become a Gentile you don't automatically become a Shakespeare.
Ostrover: Oho! A lot you know. I'll let you in on the facts, Hersheleh, because I feel we're really brothers, I feel you straining toward the core of the world. Now listen—did you ever hear of Velvl Shikkerparev? Never. A Yiddish scribbler writing romances for the Yiddish stage in the East End, I'm speaking of London, England. He finds a translator and overnight he becomes Willie Shakespeare. . . .
Edelshtein: Jokes aside, is this what you advise?
Ostrover: I would advise my own father no less. Give it up, Hersheleh, stop believing in Yiddish.
Edelshtein: But I don't believe in it!
Ostrover: You do. I see you do. It's no use talking to you, you won't let go. Tell me, Edelshtein, what language does Moses speak in the world-to-come?

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Edelshtein: From babyhood I know this. Hebrew on the Sabbath, on weekdays Yiddish.
Ostrover: Lost soul, don't make Yiddish into the Sabbath-tongue! If you believe in holiness, you're finished. Holiness is for make-believe.
Edelshtein: I want to be a Gentile like you!
Ostrover: I'm only a make-believe Gentile. This means that I play at being a Jew to satisfy them. In my village when I was a boy they used to bring in a dancing bear for the carnival, and everyone said, "It's human!"—They said this because they knew it was a bear, though it stood on two legs and waltzed. But it was a bear.

Baumzweig came to him then. "Paula and her temper. Never mind, Hersheleh, come and say hello to the big celebrity, what can you lose?" He went docilely, shook hands with Ostrover, even complimented him on his story. Ostrover was courtly, wiped his lip, let ooze a drop of ink from a slow pen, and continued autographing books. Vorovsky lingered humbly at the rim of Ostrover's circle: his head was fierce, his eyes timid; he was steering a girl by the elbow, but the girl was mooning over an open flyleaf, where Ostrover had written his name. Edelshtein, catching a flash of letters, was startled: it was the Yiddish version she held.

"Excuse me," he said.

"My niece," Vorovsky said.

"I see you read Yiddish," Edelshtein addressed her. "In your generation a miracle."

"Hannah, before you stands H. Edelshtein the poet."

"Edelshtein?"

"Yes."

She recited. "*Little fathers, little uncles, you with your beards and glasses and curly hair. . . .*"

Edelshtein shut his lids and again wept.

"If it's the same Edelshtein?"

"The same," he croaked.

"My grandfather used to do that one all the time. It was in a book he had, *A Velt ohn Vint.* But it's not possible."

"Not possible?"

"That you're still alive."

"You're right, you're right," Edelshtein said, struck. "We're all ghosts here."

"My grandfather's dead."

"Forgive him."

"*He* used to read you! And he was an old man, he died years ago, and you're still alive—"

"I'm sorry," Edelshtein said. "Maybe I was young then, I began young."

"Why do you say ghosts? Ostrover's no ghost."

"No, no," he agreed. He was afraid to offend. "Listen, I'll say the rest for you. I'll take a minute only, I promise. Listen, see if you can remember from your grandfather—"

AROUND HIM, behind him, in front of him Ostrover, Vorovsky, Baumzweig, perfumed ladies, students, the young, the young, he clawed at his wet face and declaimed, he stood like a wanton stalk in the heart of an empty field:

How you spring out of the ground covered with poverty!
In your long coats, fingers rolling wax, tallow eyes.
How can I speak to you, little fathers?
You who nestled me with lyu, lyu, lyu,
lip-lullaby. Jabber of blue-eyed sailors,
how am I fallen into a stranger's womb?

Take me back with you, history has left me out.
You belong to the Angel of Death,
I to you.
Braided wraiths, smoke,
let me fall into your graves,
I have no business being your future.

He gargled, breathed, coughed, choked, tears invaded some false channel in his throat—meanwhile he swallowed up with the seizure of each bawled word this niece, this Hannah, like the rest, boots, rough full hair, a forehead made on a Jewish last, chink eyes—

At the edge of the village a little river.
Herons tip into it pecking at their images
when the waders pass whistling like Gentiles.
The herons hang, hammocks above the sweet summer-water.
Their skulls are full of secrets, their feathers scented.
The village is so little it fits into my nostril.
The roofs shimmer tar,
the sun licks thick as cow.
No one knows what will come.
How crowded with mushrooms the forest's dark floor.

Into his ear Paula said, "Hersheleh, I apologize, come home with us, please, please, I apologize." Edelshtein gave her a push, he intended to finish. "*Littleness,*" he screamed,

I speak to you.
We are such a little huddle.
Our little hovels, our grandfathers' hard hands, how little,
our little, little words,
this lullaby
sung at the lip of your grave,

he screamed.

Baumzweig said, "That's one of your old good ones, the best."

"The one on my table, in progress, is the best," Edelshtein screamed, clamor still high over his head; but he felt soft, rested, calm; he knew how patient.

Ostrover said, "That one you shouldn't throw out the window."

Vorovsky began to laugh.

"This is the dead man's poem, now you know it," Edelshtein said, looking all around, pulling at his shawl, pulling and pulling at it: this too made Vorovsky laugh.

"Hannah, better take home your uncle Chaim,"

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Ostrover said: handsome, all white, a public genius, a feather.

Edelshtein discovered he was cheated, he had not examined the girl sufficiently.

He slept in the sons' room—bunk beds piled on each other. The top one was crowded with Paula's storage boxes. He rolled back and forth on the bottom, dreaming, jerking awake, again dreaming. Now and then, with a vomitous taste, he belched up the hot cocoa Paula had given him for reconciliation. Between the Baumzweigs and himself a private violence: lacking him, whom would they patronize? They were moralists, they needed someone to feel guilty over. Another belch. He abandoned his fine but uninnocent dream—young, he was kissing Alexei's cheeks like ripe peaches, he drew away . . . it was not Alexei, it was a girl, Vorovksy's niece. After the kiss she slowly tore the pages of a book until it snowed paper, black bits of alphabet, white bits of empty margin. Paula's snore traveled down the hall to him. He writhed out of bed and groped for a lamp. With it he lit up a decrepit table covered with ancient fragile model airplanes. Some had rubber-band propellers, some were papered over a skeleton of balsawood ribs. A game of Monopoly lay under a samite tissue of dust. His hand fell on two old envelopes, one already browning, and without hesitation he pulled the letters out and read them:

> Today was two special holidays in one, Camp Day and Sacco and Vanzetti Day. We had to put on white shirts and white shorts and go to the casino to hear Chaver Rosenbloom talk about Sacco and Vanzetti. They were a couple of Italians who were killed for loving the poor. Chaver Rosenbloom cried, and so did Mickey but I didn't. Mickey keeps forgetting to wipe himself in the toilet but I make him.
>
> Paula and Ben: thanks so much for the little knitted suit and the clown rattle. The box was a bit smashed in but the rattle came safe anyhow. Stevie will look adorable in his new blue suit when he gets big enough for it. He already seems to like the duck on the collar. It will keep him good and warm too. Josh has been working very hard these days preparing for a course in the American Novel and asks me to to tell you he'll write as soon as he can. We all send love, and Stevie sends a kiss for Grandma and Pa. *P.S.* Mickey drove down in a pink Mercedes last week. We all had quite a chat and told him he should settle down!

Heroes, martyrdom, a baby. Hatred for these letters made his eyelids quiver. Ordinariness. Everything a routine. Whatever man touches becomes banal like man. Animals don't contaminate nature. Only man the corrupter, the anti-divinity. All other species live within the pulse of nature. He despised these ceremonies and rattles and turds and kisses. The pointlessness of their babies. Wipe one generation's ass for the sake of wiping another generation's ass: this was his whole definition of civilization. He pushed back the airplanes, cleared a front patch of table with his elbow, found his pen, wrote:

> Dear Niece of Vorovsky:
>
> It is very strange to me to feel I become a Smasher, I who was born to being humane and filled with love for our darling Human Race.

But nausea for his shadowy English, which he pursued in dread, passion, bewilderment, feebleness, overcame him. He started again in his own tongue—

> Unknown Hannah:
>
> I am a man writing you in a room of the house of another man. He and I are secret enemies, so under his roof it is difficult to write the truth. Yet I swear to you I will speak these words with my heart's whole honesty. I do not remember either your face or your body. Vaguely your angry voice. To me you are an abstraction. I ask whether the ancients had any physical representation of the Future, a goddess Futura, so to speak. Presumably she would have blank eyes, like Justice. It is an incarnation of the Future to whom this letter is addressed. Writing to the Future one does not expect an answer. The Future is an oracle for whose voice one cannot wait in inaction. One must do to be. Although a Nihilist, not by choice but by conviction, I discover in myself an unwillingness to despise survival. Often I have spat on myself for having survived the death-camps—survived them drinking tea in New York!—but today when I heard carried on your tongue some old syllables of mine I was again wheedled into tolerance of survival. The sound of a dead language on a live girl's tongue! That baby should follow baby is God's trick on us, but surely we too can have a trick on God? If we fabricate with our syllables an immortality passed from the spines of the old to the shoulders of the young, even God cannot spite it. If the prayer-load that spilled upward from the mass graves should somehow survive! If not the thicket of lamentation itself, then the language on which it rode. Hannah, youth itself is nothing unless it keeps its promise to grow old. Grow old in Yiddish, Hannah, and carry fathers and uncles into the future with you. Do this. You, one in ten thousand maybe, who were born with the gift of Yiddish in your mouth, the alphabet of Yiddish in your palm, don't make ash of these!
>
> A little while ago there were twelve million people—not including babies—who lived inside this tongue, and now what is left? A language that never had a territory except Jewish mouths, and half the Jewish mouths on earth already stopped up with German worms. The rest jabber Russian, English, Spanish, God knows what. Fifty years ago my mother lived in Russia and spoke only broken Russian, but her Yiddish was like silk. In Israel they give the

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language of Solomon to machinists. Rejoice—in Solomon's time what else did the mechanics speak? Yet whoever forgets Yiddish courts amnesia of history. Mourn—the forgetting has already happened. A thousand years of our travail forgotten. Here and there a word left for vaudeville jokes. Yiddish, I call on you to choose! Yiddish! Choose death or death. Which is to say death through forgetting or death through translation. Who will redeem you? What act of salvation will restore you? All you can hope for, you tattered, you withered, is translation in America! Hannah, you have a strong mouth, made to carry the future—

But he knew he lied, lied, lied. A truthful intention is not enough. Oratory and declamation. A speech. A lecture. He felt himself an obscenity. What did the death of Jews have to do with his own troubles? His cry was ego and more ego. His own stew, foul. Whoever mourns the dead mourns himself. He wanted someone to read his poems, no one could read his poems. Filth and exploitation to throw in history. As if a dumb man should blame the ears that cannot hear him.

He turned the paper over and wrote in big letters:

EDELSHTEIN GONE,

and went down the corridor with it in pursuit of Paula's snore. Taken without ridicule a pleasant riverside noise. Bird. More cow to the sight: the connubial bed, under his gaze, gnarled and lumped—in it this old male and this old female. He was surprised on such a cold night they slept with only one blanket, gauzy cotton. They lay like a pair of kingdoms in summer. Long ago they had been at war, now they were exhausted into downy truce. Hair all over Baumzweig. Even his leg-hairs gone white. Nightstands, a pair of them, on either side of the bed, heaped with papers, books, magazines, lampshades sticking up out of all that like figurines on a prow—the bedroom was Baumzweig's second office. Towers of back issues on the floor. On the dresser a typewriter besieged by Paula's toilet water bottles and face powder. Fragrance mixed with urinous hints. Edelshtein went on looking at the sleepers. How reduced they seemed, each breath a little demand for more, more, more, a shudder of jowls: how they heaved a knee, a thumb; the tiny blue veins all over Paula's neck. Her nightgown was stretched away and he saw that her breasts had dropped sidewise and, though still very fat, hung in pitiful creased bags of mole-dappled skin. Baumzweig wore only his underwear: his thighs were full of picked sores.

He put EDELSHTEIN GONE between their heads. Then he took it away—on the other side was his real message: secret enemies. He folded the sheet inside his coat pocket and squeezed into his shoes. Cowardly. Pity for breathing carrion. All pity is self-pity. Goethe on his deathbed: more light!

IN THE STREET he felt liberated. A voyager. Snow was still falling, though more lightly than before, a night-colored blue. A veil of snow revolved in front of him, turning him around. He stumbled into a drift, a magnificent bluish pile slanted upward. Wetness pierced his feet like a surge of cold blood. Beneath the immaculate lifted slope he struck stone—the stair of a stoop. He remembered his old home, the hill of snow behind the study-house, the smoky fire, his father swaying nearly into the black fire and chanting, one big duck, the stupid one, sliding on the ice. His mother's neck too was finely veined and secretly, sweetly, luxuriantly odorous. Deeply and gravely he wished he had worn galoshes—no one reminds a widower. His shoes were infernos of cold, his toes dead blocks. Himself the only life in the street, not even a cat. The veil moved against him, turning, and beat on his pupils. Along the curb cars squatted under humps of snow, blue-backed tortoises. Nothing moved in the road. His own house was far, Vorovsky's nearer, but he could not read the street sign. A building with a canopy. Vorovsky's hat. He made himself very small, small as a mouse, and curled himself up in the fur of it. To be very, very little and to live in a hat. A little wild creature in a burrow. Inside warm, a mound of seeds nearby, licking himself for cleanliness, all sorts of weather leaping down. His glasses fell from his face and with an odd tiny crack hit the lid of a garbage can. He took off one glove and felt for them in the snow. When he found them he marveled at how the frames burned. Suppose a funeral on a night like this, how would they open the earth? His glasses were slippery as icicles when he put them on again. A crystal spectrum delighted him, but he could not see the passageway, or if there was a canopy. What he wanted from Vorovsky was Hannah.

There was no elevator. Vorovsky lived on the top floor, very high up. From his windows you could look out and see people so tiny they became patterns. It was a different building, not this one. He went down three fake-marble steps and saw a door. It was open: inside was a big black room knobby with baby carriages and tricycles. He smelled wet metal like a toothpain: life! Peretz tells how on a bitter night a Jew outside the window envied peasants swigging vodka in a hovel—friends in their prime and warm before the fire. Carriages and tricycles, instruments of Diaspora. Baumzweig with his picked sores was once also a baby. In the Diaspora the birth of a Jew increases nobody's population, the death of a Jew has no meaning. Anonymous. To have died among the martyrs—solidarity at least, a passage into history, one of the marked ones, *kiddush ha-shem*.—A telephone on the wall. He pulled off his glasses, all clouded over, and took out a pad with numbers in it and dialed.

"Ostrover?"

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"Who is this?"

"*Yankel* Ostrover, the writer, or Pisher Ostrover the plumber?"

"What do you want?"

"To leave evidence," Edelshtein howled.

"Never mind! Make an end! Who's there?"

"The Messiah."

"Who is this?—Mendel, it's you?"

"Never."

"Gorochov?"

"That toenail? Please. Trust me."

"Fall into a hole!"

"This is how a man addresses his Redeemer?"

"It's five o'clock in the morning! What do you want? Bum! Lunatic! Cholera! Black year! Plague! Poisoner! Strangler!"

"You think you'll last longer than your shroud, Ostrover? Your sentences are an abomination, your style is like a pump, a pimp has a sweeter tongue—"

"Angel of Death!"

He dialed Vorovsky but there was no answer.

The snow had turned white as the white of an eye. He wandered toward Hannah's house, though he did not know where she lived, or what her name was, or whether he had ever seen her. On the way he rehearsed what he would say to her. But this was not satisfactory, he could lecture but not speak into a face. He bled to retrieve her face. He was in pursuit of her, she was his destination. Why? What does a man look for, what does he need? What can a man retrieve? Can the future retrieve the past? And if retrieve, how redeem? His shoes streamed. Each step was a pond. The herons in spring, red-legged. Secret eyes they have: the eyes of birds—frightening. Too open. The riddle of openness. His feet poured rivers. Cold, cold.

Little old man in the cold,
come hop up on the stove,
your wife will give you a crust with jam.
Thank you, muse, for this little psalm.

He belched. His stomach was unwell. Indigestion? A heart attack? He wiggled the fingers of his left hand: though frozen they tingled. Heart. Maybe only ulcer. Cancer, like Mireleh? In a narrow bed he missed his wife. How much longer could he expect to live? An unmarked grave. Who would know he had ever been alive? He had no descendants, his grandchildren were imaginary. *O my unborn grandson. . . .* Hackneyed. *Ungrandfathered ghost. . . .* Too baroque. Simplicity, purity, truthfulness.

He wrote:

Dear Hannah:

You made no impression on me. When I wrote you before at Baumzweig's I lied. I saw you for a second in a public place, so what? Holding a Yiddish book. A young face on top of a Yiddish book. Nothing else. For me this is worth no somersault. Ostrover's vomit!—that popularizer, vulgarian, panderer to people who have lost the memory of peoplehood. A thousand times a pimp. Your uncle Chaim said about you: "She writes." A pity on his judgment. Writes! Writes! Potatoes in a sack! Another one! What do you write? When will you write? How will you write? Either you'll become an editor of *Good Housekeeping*, or, if serious, join the gang of so-called Jewish novelists. I've sniffed them all, I'm intimate with their smell. Satirists they call themselves. Picking at their crotches. What do they *know*, I mean of *knowledge*? To satirize you have to know something. In a so-called novel by a so-called Jewish novelist ("activist-existential"—listen, I understand, I read everything!)—Elkin, Stanley, to keep to only one example—the hero visits Williamsburg to contact a so-called "miracle rabbi." Even the word *rabbi*! No, listen—to me, a descendant of the Vilna Gaon myself, the *guter yid* is a charlatan and his *chasidim* are victims, never mind if willing or not. But that's not the point. You have to KNOW SOMETHING! At least the difference between a *rav* and a *rebbeh!* At least a *pinteleh* here and there! Otherwise where's the joke, where's the satire, where's the mockery? American-born! An ignoramus mocks only himself. *Jewish* novelists! Savages! The allrightnik's children, all they know is to curse the allrightnik! Their Yiddish! One word here, one word there. *Shikseh* on one page, *putz* on the other, and that's the whole vocabulary! And when they give a try at phonetic rendition! Darling God! If they had mothers and fathers, they crawled out of the swamps. Their grandparents were tree-squirrels if that's how they held their mouths. They know ten words for, excuse me, penis, and when it comes to a word for learning they're impotent!

Joy, joy! He felt himself on the right course at last. Daylight was coming, a yellow elephant rocked silently by in the road. A little light burned eternally on its tusk. He let it slide past, he stood up to the knees in the river at home, whirling with joy. He wrote:

TRUTH!

But this great thick word, Truth!, was too harsh, oaken; with his finger in the snow he crossed it out.

I was saying: indifference. I'm indifferent to you and your kind. Why should I think you're another species, something better? Because you knew a shred of a thread of a poem of mine? Ha! I was seduced by my own vanity. I have a foolish tendency to make symbols out of glimpses. My poor wife, peace on her, used to ridicule me for this. Riding in the subway once I saw a beautiful child, a boy about twelve. A Puerto Rican, dusky, yet he had cheeks like pomegranates. I once knew, in Kiev, a child who looked like that. I admit to it. A portrait under the skin of my eyes. The love of a man for a boy. Why not confess it? Is it against the nature of man to rejoice in beauty? "This is

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to be expected with a childless man"—my wife's verdict. That what I wanted was a son. Take this as a complete explanation: if an ordinary person cannot

The end of the sentence flew like a leaf out of his mind . . . it was turning into a quarrel with Mireleh. Who quarrels with the dead? He wrote:

Esteemed Alexei Yosifovitch:

You remain. You remain. An illumination. More than my own home, nearer than my mother's mouth. Nimbus. Your father slapped my father. You were never told. Because I kissed you on the green stairs. The shadow-place on the landing where I once saw the butler scratch his pants. They sent us away shamed. My father and I, into the mud.

Again a lie. Never near the child. Lying is like a vitamin, it has to fortify everything. Only through the doorway, looking, looking. The gleaming face: the face of flame. Or would test him on verb-forms: *kal, nifal, piel, pual, hifil, hofal, hispael.* On the afternoons the Latin tutor came, crouched outside the threshold, Edelshtein heard *ego, mei, mihi, me, me.* May may. Beautiful foreign nasal chant of riches. Latin! Dirty from the lips of idolators. An apostate family. Edelshtein and his father took their coffee and bread, but otherwise lived on boiled eggs: the elder Kirilov one day brought home with him the *mashgiach* from the Jewish poorhouse to testify to the purity of the servants' kitchen, but to Edelshtein's father the whole house was *treyf*, the *mashgiach* himself a hired impostor. Who would oversee the overseer? Among the Kirilovs with their lying name money was the best overseer. Money saw to everything. Though they had their particular talent. Mechanical. Alexei Y. Kirilov, engineer. Bridges, towers. Consultant to Cairo. Builder of the Aswan Dam, assistant to Pharoah for the latest Pyramid. To set down such a fantasy about such an important Soviet brain . . . poor little Alexei, Avremeleh, I'll jeopardize your position in life, little corpse of Babi Yar.

Only focus. Hersh! Scion of the Vilna Gaon! Prince of rationality! Pay attention!

He wrote:

The gait—the prance, the hobble—of Yiddish is not the same as the gait of English. A big headache for a translator probably. In Yiddish you use more words than in English. Nobody believes it but it's true. Another big problem is form. The moderns take the old forms and fill them up with mockery, love, drama, satire, etc. Plenty of play. But STILL THE SAME OLD FORMS, conventions left over from the last century even. It doesn't matter who denies this, out of pride: it's true. Pour in symbolism, impressionism, be complex, be subtle, be daring, take risks, break your teeth—whatever you do, it still comes out Yiddish. *Mamaloshen* doesn't produce *Wastelands*. No alienation, no nihilism, no dadaism. With all the suffering no smashing! No INCOHERENCE! Keep the latter in mind, Hannah, if you expect to make progress. Also: please remember that when a goy from Columbus, Ohio, says "Elijah the Prophet" he's not talking about *Eliohu hanovi*. Eliohu is one of us, a *folksmensh*, running around in second-hand clothes. Theirs is God knows what. The same biblical figure, with exactly the same history, once he puts on a name from King James, COMES OUT A DIFFERENT PERSON. Life, history, hope, tragedy, they don't come out even. They talk Bible Lands, with us it's *eretz yisroel*. A misfortune.

ASTONISHED, he struck up against a kiosk. A telephone! On a street corner! He had to drag the door open, pulling a load of snow. Then he squeezed inside. His fingers were sticks. Never mind the pad, he forgot even where the pocket was. In his coat? Jacket? Pants? With one stick he dialed Vorovsky's number: from memory.

"Hello, Chaim?"

"This is Ostrover."

"Ostrover! Why Ostrover? What are you doing there? I want Vorovsky."

"Who's this?"

"Edelshtein."

"I thought so. A persecution, what is this? I could send you to jail for tricks like before—"

"Quick, give me Vorovsky."

"I'll *give* you."

"Vorovsky's not home?"

"How do I know if Vorovsky's home? It's dawn, go ask Vorovsky!"

Edelshtein grew weak: "I called the wrong number."

"Hersheleh, if you want some friendly advice you'll listen to me. I can get you jobs at fancy out-of-town country clubs, Miami Florida included, plenty of speeches your own style, only what they need is rational lecturers not lunatics. If you carry on like tonight you'll lose what you have."

"I don't have anything."

"Accept life, Edelshtein."

"Dead man, I appreciate your guidance."

"Yesterday I heard from Hollywood, they're making a movie from one of my stories. So now tell me again who's dead."

"The puppet the ventriloquist holds in his lap. A piece of log. It's somebody else's language and the dead doll sits there."

"Wit, you want them to make movies in Yiddish now?"

"In Talmud if you save a single life it's as if you saved the world. And if you save a language? Worlds maybe. Galaxies. The whole universe."

"Hersheleh, the God of the Jews made a mistake when he didn't have a son, it would be a good occupation for you."

"Instead I'll be an extra in your movie. If they shoot the *shtetl* on location in Kansas send me expense money. I'll come and be local color for you.

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I'll put on my *shtreiml* and walk around, the people should see a real Jew. For ten dollars more I'll even speak *mamaloshen*."

Ostrover said, "It doesn't matter what you speak, envy sounds the same in all languages."

Edelshtein said, "Once there was a ghost who thought he was still alive. You know what happened to him? He got up one morning and began to shave and he cut himself. And there was no blood. No blood at all. And he still didn't believe it, so he looked in the mirror to see. And there was no reflection, no sign of himself. He wasn't there. But he still didn't believe it, so he began to scream, but there was no sound, no sound at all—"

There was no sound from the telephone. He let it dangle and rock.

HE LOOKED for the pad. Diligently he consulted himself: pants cuffs have a way of catching necessary objects. The number had fallen out of his body. Off his skin. He needed Vorovsky because he needed Hannah. Worthwhile maybe to telephone Baumzweig for Vorovsky's number, Paula could look it up—Baumzweig's number he knew by heart, no mistake. He had singled out his need. Svengali, Pygmalion, Rasputin, Dr. (jokes aside) Frankenstein. What does it require to make a translator? A secondary occupation. Parasitic. But your own creature. Take this girl Hannah and train her. His alone. American-born but she had the advantage over him, English being no worm on her palate; also she could read his words in the original. Niece of a vanquished mind—still, genes are in reality God, and if Vorovsky had a little talent for translation why not the niece?—Or the other. Russia. The one in the Soviet Union who wrote two stanzas in Yiddish. In Yiddish! And only twenty! Born 1948, same year they made up to be the Doctors' Plot, Stalin already very busy killing Jews, Markish, Kvitko, Kushnirov, Hofshtein, Mikhoels, Susskin, Bergelson, Feffer, Gradzenski with the wooden leg. All slaughtered. How did Yiddish survive in the mouth of that girl? Nurtured in secret. Taught by an obsessed grandfather, a crazy uncle: Marranos. The poem reprinted, as they say, in the West. (The West! If a Jew says "the West," he sounds like an imbecile. In a puddle what's West, what's East?) Flowers, blue sky, she yearns for the end of winter: very nice. A zero, and received like a prodigy! An aberration! A miracle! Because composed in the lost tongue. As if some Neapolitan child suddenly begins to prattle in Latin. Not the same. Little verses merely. Death confers awe. Russian: its richness, directness. For "iron" and "weapon" the same word. A *thick* language, a world-language. He visualized himself translated into Russian, covertly, by the Marranos' daughter. To be circulated, in typescript, underground: to be read, read!

Understand me, Hannah—that our treasure-tongue is derived from strangers means nothing. 90 per cent German roots, 10 per cent Slavic: irrelevant. The Hebrew take for granted without percentages. We are a people who have known how to forge the language of need out of the language of necessity. Our reputation among ourselves as a nation of scholars is mostly empty. In actuality we are a mob of working people, laborers, hewers of wood, believe me. Leivik, our chief poet, was a housepainter. Today all pharmacists, lawyers, accountants, haberdashers, but tickle the lawyer and you'll see his grandfather sawed wood for a living. That's how it is with us. Nowadays the Jew is forgetful, everybody with a profession, every Jewish boy a professor—justice seems less urgent. Most don't realize this quiet time is only another Interim. Always, like in a terrible Wagnerian storm, we have our interludes of rest. So now. Once we were slaves, now we are free men, remember the bread of affliction. But listen. Whoever cries Justice! is a liberated slave. Whoever honors Work is a liberated slave. They accuse Yiddish literature of sentimentality in this connection. Very good, true. True, so be it! A dwarf at a sewing machine can afford a little loosening of the heart. I return to Leivik. He could hang wallpaper. I once lived in a room he papered—yellow vines. Rutgers Street that was. A good job, no bubbles, no peeling. This from a poet of very morbid tendencies. Mani Leib fixed shoes. Moishe Leib Halpern was a waiter, once in a while a handyman. I could tell you the names of twenty poets of very pure expression who were operators, pressers, cutters. In addition to fixing shoes Mani Leib was also a laundryman. I beg you not to think I'm preaching Socialism. To my mind politics is dung. What I mean is something else: Work is Work, and Thought is Thought. Politics tries to mix these up, Socialism especially. The language of a hard-pressed people works under the laws of purity, dividing the Commanded from the Profane. I remember one of my old teachers. He used to take attendance every day and he gave his occupation to the taxing council as "attendance-taker"—so that he wouldn't be getting paid for teaching Torah. This with five pupils, all living in his house and fed by his wife! Call it splitting a hair if you want, but it's the hair of a head that distinguished between the necessary and the merely needed. People who believe that Yiddish is, as they like to say, "richly intermixed," and that in Yiddishkeit the presence of the Covenant, of Godliness, inhabits humble things and humble words, are under a delusion or a deception. The slave knows exactly when he belongs to God and when to the oppressor. The liberated slave who is not forgetful and can remember when he himself was an artifact, knows exactly the difference between God and an artifact. A language also knows whom it is serving at each moment. I am feeling very cold right now. Of course you see that when I say liberated I mean self-liberated. Moses not Lincoln, not Franz Josef. Yiddish is the language of auto-emancipation. Theodor Herzl wrote in

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German but the message spread in *mamaloshen* —my God cold. Naturally the important thing is to stick to what you learned as a slave including language, and not to speak their language, otherwise you will become like them, acquiring their confusion between God and artifact and consequently their taste for making slaves, both of themselves and others.

Slave of rhetoric! This is the trouble when you use God for a Muse. Philosophers, thinkers—all cursed. Poets have it better: most are Greeks and pagans, unbelievers except in natural religion, stones, stars, body. This cube and cell. Ostrover had already sentenced him to jail, little booth in the vale of snow; black instrument beeped from a gallows. The white pad—something white—on the floor. Edelshtein bent for it and struck his jaw. Through the filth of the glass doors morning rose out of the dark. He saw what he held:

"ALL OF US ARE HUMANS TOGETHER
BUT SOME HUMANS SHOULD DROP DEAD."

DO YOU FEEL THIS?

IF SO CALL TR 5-2530 IF YOU WANT TO
KNOW WHETHER YOU WILL SURVIVE IN
CHRIST'S FIVE-DAY INEXPENSIVE
ELECT-PLAN

*

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He was touched and curious, but withdrawn. The cold lit him unfamiliarly: his body a brilliant hollowness, emptied of organs, cleansed of debris, the inner flanks of him perfect lit glass. A clear chalice. Of small change he had only a nickel and a dime. For the dime he could CALL TR-5-2530 and take advice appropriate to his immaculateness, his transparency. Rose or Lou. He had no satire for their love. How manifold and various the human imagination. The simplicity of an ascent lured him, he was alert to the probability of levitation but disregarded it. The disciples of Reb Moshe of Kobryn also disregarded feats in opposition to nature—they had no awe for their master when he hung in air, but when he slept—the miracle of his lung, his breath, his heartbeat! He lurched from the booth into rushing daylight. The depth of snow sucked off one of his shoes. The serpent too prospers without feet, so he cast off his and weaved on. His arms, particularly the hands, particularly those partners of mind his fingers, he was sorry to lose. He knew his eyes, his tongue, his stinging loins. He was again tempted to ascend. The hillock was profound. He outwitted it by creeping through it, he drilled patiently into the snow. He wanted to stand then but without legs could not. Indolently he permitted himself to rise. He went only high enough to see the snowy sidewalks, the mounds in gutters and against stoops, the beginning of business time. Lifted light. A doorman fled out of a building wearing earmuffs, pulling a shovel behind him like a little tin cart. Edelshtein drifted no higher than the man's shoulders. He watched the shovel pierce the snow, tunneling down, but there was no bottom, the earth was without foundation.

He came under a black wing. He thought it was the first blindness of Death but it was only a canopy.

THE DOORMAN went on digging under the canopy; under the canopy Edelshtein tasted wine and felt himself at a wedding, his own, the canopy covering his steamy gold eyeglasses made blind by Mireleh's veil. Four beings held up the poles: one his wife's cousin the postman, one his own cousin the druggist; two poets. The first poet was a beggar who lived on institutional charity—Baumzweig; the second, Silverman, sold ladies' elastic stockings, the kind for varicose veins. The postman and the druggist were still alive, only one of them retired. The poets were ghosts, Baumzweig picking at himself in bed also a ghost, Silverman was long dead, more than twenty years—*lideleh-shreiber* they called him, he wrote for the popular theater. "Song to Steerage": *Steerage, steerage, I remember the crowds, the rags we took with us we treated like shrouds, we tossed them away when we spied out the shore, going re-born through the Golden Door.* . . . Even on Second Avenue 1905 was already stale, but it stopped the show, made fevers, encores, tears, yells. Golden sidewalks. America the bride, under her fancy gown nothing. Poor Silverman, in love with the Statue of Liberty's lifted arm, what did he do in his life beside raise up a post at an empty wedding, no progeny?

The doorman dug out a piece of statuary, an urn with a stone wreath.

Under the canopy Edelshtein recognized it. Sand, butts, a half-naked angel astride the wreath. Once Edelshtein saw a condom in it. Found! Vorovsky's building. There is no God, yet who brought him here if not the King of the Universe? Not so bad off after all, even in a snowstorm he could find his way, an expert, he knew one block from another in this desolation of a world.

He carried his shoe into the elevator like a baby, an orphan, a redemption. He could kiss even a shoe.

In the corridor laughter, toilets flushing; coffee stabbed him.

He rang the bell.

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From behind Vorovsky's door, laughter, laughter!

No one came.

He rang again. No one came. He banged. "Chaim, crazy man, open up!" No one came. "A dead man from the cold knocks, you don't come? Hurry up, open, I'm a stick of ice, you want a dead man at your door? Mercy! Pity! Open up!"

No one came.

He listened to the laughter. It had a form; a method, rather; some principle, closer to physics than music, of arching up and sinking back. Inside the shape barks, howls, dogs, wolves, wilderness. After each fright a crevice to fall into. He made an anvil of his shoe and took the doorknob for an iron hammer and thrust. He thrust, thrust. The force of an iceberg.

Close to the knob a panel bulged and cracked. Not his fault. On the other side someone was unused to the lock.

He heard Vorovsky but saw Hannah.

She said: "What?"

"You don't remember me? I'm the one what recited to you tonight my work from several years past, I was passing by in your uncle's neighborhood—"

"He's sick."

"What, a fit?"

"All night. I've been here the whole night. The whole night—"

"Let me in."

"Please go away. I just told you."

"In. What's the matter with you? I'm sick myself, I'm dead from cold! Hey, Chaim! Lunatic, stop it!"

VOROVSKY was on his belly on the floor, stifling his mouth with a pillow as if it were a stone, knocking his head down on it, but it was no use, the laughter shook the pillow and came yelping out, not muffled but increased, darkened. He laughed and said "Hannah" and laughed.

Edelshtein took a chair and dragged it near Vorovsky and sat. The room stank, a subway latrine.

"Stop," he said.

Vorovsky laughed.

"All right, merriment, very good, be happy. You're warm, I'm cold. Have mercy, little girl—tea. Hannah. Boil it up hot. Pieces of flesh drop from me." He heard that he was speaking Yiddish, so he began again for her. "I'm sorry. Forgive me. A terrible thing to do. I was lost outside, I was looking, so now I found you, I'm sorry."

"It isn't a good time for a visit, that's all."

"Bring some tea also for your uncle."

"He can't."

"He can maybe, let him try. Someone who laughs like this is ready for a feast—*flanken, tsimmis, rosselfleysh*—" In Yiddish he said, "In the world-to-come people dance at parties like this, all laughter, joy. The day after the Messiah people laugh like this."

Vorovsky laughed and said "Messiah" and sucked the pillow, spitting. His face was a flood: tears ran upside down into his eyes, over his forehead, saliva sprang in puddles around his ears. He was spitting, crying, burbling, he gasped, wept, spat. His eyes were bloodshot, the whites showed likes slashes, wounds; he still wore his hat. He laughed, he was still laughing. His pants were wet, the fly open, now and then seeping. He dropped the pillow for the tea and ventured a sip, with his tongue, like an animal full of hope—vomit rolled up with the third swallow and he laughed between spasms, he was still laughing, stinking, a sewer.

Edelshtein took pleasure in the tea, it touched him to the root, more gripping on his bowel than the coffee that stung the hall. He praised himself with no meanness, no bitterness: prince of rationality! Thawing, he said, "Give him *schnapps*, he can hold *schnapps*, no question."

"He drank and he vomited."

"Chaim, little soul," Edelshtein said, "what started you off? Myself. I was there. I said it, I said graves, I said smoke. I'm the responsible one. Death. Death, I'm the one who said it. Death you laugh at, you're no coward."

"If you want to talk business with my uncle come another time."

"Death is business?"

Now he examined her. Born 1945, in the hour of the death camps. Not selected. Immune. The whole way she held herself looked immune—by this he meant American. Still, an exhausted child, straggled head, remarkable child to stay through the night with the madman. "Where's your mother?" he said. "Why doesn't she come to watch her brother? Why does it fall on you? You should be free, you have your own life."

"You don't know anything about families."

She was acute: no mother, father, wife, child, what did he know about families? He was cut off, a survivor. "I know your uncle," he said, but without belief: in the first place Vorovsky had an education. "In his right mind your uncle doesn't want you to suffer."

Vorovsky, laughing, said "Suffer."

"He likes to suffer. He wants to suffer. He admires suffering. All you people want to suffer."

Pins and needles: Edelshtein's fingertips were fevering. He stroked the heat of the cup. He could feel. He said, " 'You people'?"

"You Jews."

"Aha. Chaim, you hear? Your niece Hannah—on the other side already, never mind she's acquainted with *mamaloshen*. In one generation, 'you Jews.' You don't like suffering? Maybe you respect it?"

"It's unnecessary."

"It comes from history, history is also unnecessary?"

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"History's a waste."

America the empty bride. Edelshtein said, "You're right about business. I came on business. My whole business is waste."

Vorovsky laughed and said "Hersheleh Frog Frog Frog."

"I think you're making him worse," Hannah said. "Tell me what you want and I'll give him the message."

"He's not deaf."

"He doesn't remember afterward—"

"I have no message."

"Then what do you want from him?"

"Nothing. I want from you."

"Frog Frog Frog Frog Frog."

Edelshtein finished his tea and put the cup on the floor and for the first time absorbed Vorovsky's apartment: until now Vorovsky had kept him out. It was one room, sink and stove behind a plastic curtain, bookshelves leaning over not with books but journals piled flat, a sticky table, a sofa-bed, a desk, six kitchen chairs, and along the walls seventy-five cardboard boxes which Edelshtein knew harbored two thousand copies of Vorovsky's dictionary. A pity on Vorovsky, he had a dispute with the publisher, who turned back half the printing to him. Vorovsky had to pay for two thousand German-English mathematical dictionaries, and now he had to sell them himself, but he did not know what to do, how to go about it. It was his fate to swallow what he first excreted. Because of a mishap in business he owned his life, he possessed what he was, a slave, but invisible. A hungry snake has to eat its tail all the way down to the head until it disappears.

Hannah said: "What could I do for you"—flat, not a question.

"Again 'you.' A distinction, a separation. What I'll ask is this: annihilate 'you,' annihilate 'me.' We'll come to an understanding, we'll get together."

She bent for his cup and he saw her boot. He was afraid of a boot. He said mildly, nicely, "Look, your uncle tells me you're one of us. By 'us' he means writer, no?"

"By 'us' you mean Jew."

"And you're not a Jew, *meydeleh*?"

"Not your kind."

"Nowadays there have to be kinds? Good, bad, old, new—"

"Old and new."

"All right! So let it be old and new, fine, a reasonable beginning. Let old work with new. Listen, I need a collaborator. Not exactly a collaborator, it's not even complicated like that. What I need is a translator."

"My uncle the translator is indisposed."

At that moment Edelshtein discovered he hated irony. He yelled, "Not your uncle. You! You!"

Howling, Vorovsky crawled to a tower of cartons and beat on them with his bare heels. There was an alteration in his laughter, something not theatrical but of the theater—he was amused, entertained, clowns paraded between his legs.

"You'll save Yiddish," Edelshtein said, "you'll be like a Messiah to a whole generation, a whole literature, naturally you'll have to work at it, practice, it takes knowledge, it takes a gift, a genius, a born poet—"

Hannah walked in her boots with his dirty teacup. From behind the plastic he heard the faucet. She opened the curtain and came out and said: "You old men."

"Ostrover's pages you kiss!"

"You jealous old men from the ghetto," she said.

"And Ostrover's young, a young prince? Listen! You don't see, you don't follow—translate me, lift me out of the ghetto, it's my life that's hanging on you!"

Her voice was a whip. "Bloodsuckers," she said. "It isn't a translator you're after, it's someone's soul. Too much history's drained your blood, you want someone to take you over, a dybbuk—"

"Dybbuk! Ostrover's language. All right, I need a dybbuk, I'll become a golem, I don't care, it doesn't matter! Breathe in me! Animate me! Without you I'm a clay pot!" Bereaved, he yelled, "Translate me!"

The clowns ran over Vorovsky's charmed belly.

Hannah said: "You think I have to read Ostrover in translation? You think translation has anything to do with what Ostrover is?"

EDELSHTEIN ACCUSED HER, "Who taught you to read Yiddish? What right have you to Yiddish?—A girl like that, to know the letters worthy of life and to be ignorant! 'You Jews,' 'you people,' you you you!"

"I learned, my grandfather taught me, I'm not responsible for it, I didn't go looking for it, I was smart, a golden head, same as now. But I have my own life, you said it yourself, I don't have to throw it out. So pay attention, Mr. Vampire: even in Yiddish Ostrover's not in the ghetto. Even in Yiddish he's not like you people."

"He's not in the ghetto? Which ghetto, what ghetto? So where is he? In the sky? In the clouds? With the angels? Where?"

She meditated, she was all intelligence. "In the world," she answered him.

"In the marketplace. A fishwife, a *kochleffel*, everything's his business, you he'll autograph, me he'll get jobs, he listens to everybody."

"Whereas you people listen only to yourselves."

In the room something was absent.

Edelshtein, pushing into his snow-damp shoe, said into the absence, "So? You're not interested?"

"Only in the mainstream. Not in your little puddles."

"Again the ghetto. Your uncle stinks from the ghetto? Graduated, 1924, the University of Berlin, Vorovsky stinks from the ghetto? Myself, four God-given books not one living human being knows, I stink from the ghetto? God, four thousand

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years since Abraham hanging out with Jews, God also stinks from the ghetto?"

"Rhetoric," Hannah said. "Yiddish literary rhetoric. That's the style."

"Only Ostrover doesn't stink from the ghetto."

"A question of vision."

"Better say visions. He doesn't know real things."

"He knows a reality beyond realism."

"American literary babies! And in your language you don't have a rhetoric?" Edelshtein burst out. "Very good, he's achieved it, Ostrover's the world. A pantheist, a pagan, a goy."

"That's it. You've nailed it. A Freudian, a Jungian, a sensibility. No little love stories. A contemporary. He speaks for everybody."

"Aha. Sounds familiar already. For humanity he speaks? Humanity?"

"Humanity," she said.

"And to speak for Jews isn't to speak for humanity? We're not human? We're not present on the face of the earth? We don't suffer? In Russia they let us live? In Egypt they don't want to murder us?"

"Suffer suffer," she said. "I like devils best. They don't think only about themselves and they don't suffer."

Immediately, looking at Hannah—my God, an old man, he was looking at her little waist, underneath it where the little apple of her womb was hidden away—immediately, all at once, instantaneously, he fell into a chaos, a trance, of truth, of actuality: was it possible? He saw everything in miraculous reversal, blessed—everything plain, distinct, understandable, true. What he understood was this: that the ghetto was the real world, and the outside world only a ghetto. Because in actuality who was shut off? Who then was really buried, removed, inhabited by darkness? To whom, in what little space, did God offer Sinai? Who kept Terach and who followed Abraham? Talmud explains that when the Jews went into Exile, God went into Exile also. Babi Yar is maybe the real world, and Kiev with its German toys, New York with all its terrible intelligence, all fictions, fantasies. Unreality.

An infatuation! He was the same, all his life the same as this poisonous wild girl, he coveted mythologies, specters, animals, voices. Western Civilization his secret guilt, he was ashamed of the small tremor of his self-love, degraded by being ingrown. Alexei with his skin a furnace of desire, his trucks and trains! He longed to be Alexei. Alexei with his German toys and his Latin! Alexei whose destiny was to grow up into the world-at-large, to slip from the ghetto, to break out into engineering for Western Civilization! Alexei, I abandon you! I'm at home only in a prison, history is my prison, the ravine my house, only listen—suppose it turns out that the destiny of the Jews is vast, open, eternal, and that Western Civilization is meant to dwindle, shrivel, shrink into the ghetto of the world—what of history then? Kings, Parliaments, like insects, Presidents like vermin, their religion a row of little dolls, their art a cave smudge, their poetry a lust —Avremeleh, when you fell from the ledge over the ravine into your grave, for the first time you fell into reality.

To Hannah he said: "I didn't ask to be born into Yiddish. It came on me."

He meant he was blessed.

"So keep it," she said, "and don't complain."

WITH THE whole ferocity of his delight in it he hit her mouth. The madman again struck up his laugh. Only now was it possible to notice that something had stopped it before. A missing harp. The absence filled with bloody laughter, bits of what looked like red pimento hung in the vomit on Vorovsky's chin, the clowns fled, Vorovsky's hat with its pinnacle of fur dangled on his chest—he was spent, he was beginning to fall into the quake of sleep, he slept, he dozed, roars burst from him, he hiccuped, woke, laughed, an enormous grief settled in him, he went on napping and laughing, grief had him in its teeth.

Edelshtein's hand, the cushiony underside of it, blazed from giving the blow. "You," he said, "you have no ideas, what are you?" A shred of learning flaked from him, what the sages said of Job ripped from his tongue like a peeling of the tongue itself, *he never was, he never existed.* "You were never born, you were never created!" he yelled. "Let me tell you, a dead man tells you this, at least I had a life, at least I understood something!"

"Die," she told him. "Die now, all you old men, what are you waiting for? Hanging on my neck, him and now you, the whole bunch of you, parasites, hurry up and die."

His palm burned, it was the first time he had ever slapped a child. He felt like a father. Her mouth lay back naked on her face. Out of spite, against instinct, she kept her hands from the bruise—he could see the shape of her teeth, turned a little one on the other, imperfect, again vulnerable. From fury her nose streamed. He had put a bulge in her lip.

"Forget Yiddish!" he screamed at her. "Wipe it out of your brain! Extirpate it! Go get a memory operation! You have no right to it, you have no right to an uncle, a grandfather! No one ever came before you, you were never born! A vacuum!"

"You old atheists," she called after him. "You dead old socialists. Boring! You bore me to death. You hate magic, you hate imagination, you talk God and you hate God, you despise, you bore, you envy, you eat people up with your disgusting old age—cannibals, all you care about is your own youth, you're finished, give somebody else a turn!"

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This held him. He leaned on the door frame. "A turn at what? I didn't offer you a turn? An opportunity of a lifetime? To be published now, in youth, in babyhood, early in life? Translated I'd be famous, this you don't understand. Hannah, listen," he said, kindly, ingratiatingly, reasoning with her like a father, "you don't have to like my poems, do I ask you to *like* them? I don't ask you to like them, I don't ask you to respect them, I don't ask you to love them. A man my age, do I want a lover or a translator? Am I asking a favor? No. Look," he said, "one thing I forgot to tell you. A business deal. That's all. Business, plain and simple. I'll pay you. You didn't think I wouldn't pay, God forbid?"

Now she covered her mouth. He wondered at his need to weep; he was ashamed.

"Hannah, please, how much? I'll pay, you'll see. Whatever you like. You'll buy anything you want. Dresses, shoes—" *Gottenyu,* what could such a wild beast want? "You'll buy more boots, all kinds of boots, whatever you want, books, everything—" He said relentlessly, "You'll have from me money."

"No," she said, "no."

"Please. What will happen to me? What's wrong? My ideas aren't good enough? Who asks you to believe in my beliefs? I'm an old man, used up, I have nothing to say any more, anything I ever said was all imitation. Walt Whitman I used to like. Also John Donne. Poets, masters. We, what have we got? A Yiddish Keats? Never—" He was ashamed, so he wiped his cheeks with both sleeves. "Business. I'll pay you," he said.

"No."

"Because I hit you? Forgive me, I apologize. I'm crazier than he is, I should be locked up for it—"

"Not because of that."

"Then why not? *Meydeleh,* why not? What harm would it do you? Help out an old man."

She said desolately, "You don't interest me. I would have to be interested."

"I see. Naturally." He looked at Vorovsky. "Goodbye, Chaim, regards from Aristotle. What distinguishes men from the beasts is the power of ha-ha-ha. So good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Be well. Chaim, live until a hundred and twenty. The main thing is health."

IN THE STREET it was full day, and he was warm from the tea. The road glistened, the sidewalks. Paths crisscrossed in unexpected places, sleds clanged, people ran. A drugstore was open and he went in to telephone Baumzweig: he dialed, but on the way he skipped a number, heard an iron noise like a weapon, and had to dial again. "Paula," he practiced, "I'll come back for a while, all right? For breakfast maybe," but instead he changed his mind and decided to CALL TR 5-2530. At the other end of the wire it was either Rose or Lou. Edelshtein told the eunuch's voice, "I believe with you about some should drop dead. Pharoah, Queen Isabella, Haman, that pogromchik King Louis they call in history Saint, Hitler, Stalin, Nasser—" The voice said, "You're a Jew?" It sounded Southern but somehow not Negro—maybe because schooled, polished: "Accept Jesus as your Saviour and you shall have Jerusalem restored." "We already got it," Edelshtein said. *Meshiachtseiten*! "The terrestrial Jerusalem has no significance. Earth is dust. The Kingdom of God is within. Christ released man from Judaic exclusivism." "Who's excluding who?" Edelshtein said. "Christianity is Judaism universalized. Jesus is Moses publicized for ready availability. Our God is the God of Love, your God is the God of Wrath. Look how He abandoned you in Auschwitz." "It wasn't only God who didn't notice." "You people are cowards, you never even tried to defend yourselves. You got a wide streak of yellow, you don't know how to hold a gun." "Tell it to the Egyptians," Edelshtein said. "Everyone you come into contact with turns into your enemy. When you were in Europe every nation despised you. When you moved to take over the Middle East the Arab Nation, spic faces like your own, your very own bloodkin, began to hate you. You are a bone in the throat of all mankind." "Who gnaws at bones? Dogs and rats only." "Even your food habits are abnormal, against the grain of quotidian delight. You refuse to seethe a lamb in the milk of its mother. You will not eat a fertilized egg because it has a spot of blood on it. When you wash your hands you chant. You pray in a debased jargon, not in the beautiful sacramental English of our Holy Bible." Edelshtein said, "That's right, Jesus spoke the King's English." "Even now, after the good Lord knows how many years in America, you talk with a kike accent. You kike, you Yid."

Edelshtein shouted into the telephone, "Amalekite! Titus! Nazi! The whole world is infected by you anti-Semites! On account of you children become corrupted! On account of you I lost everything, my whole life! On account of you I have no translator!"

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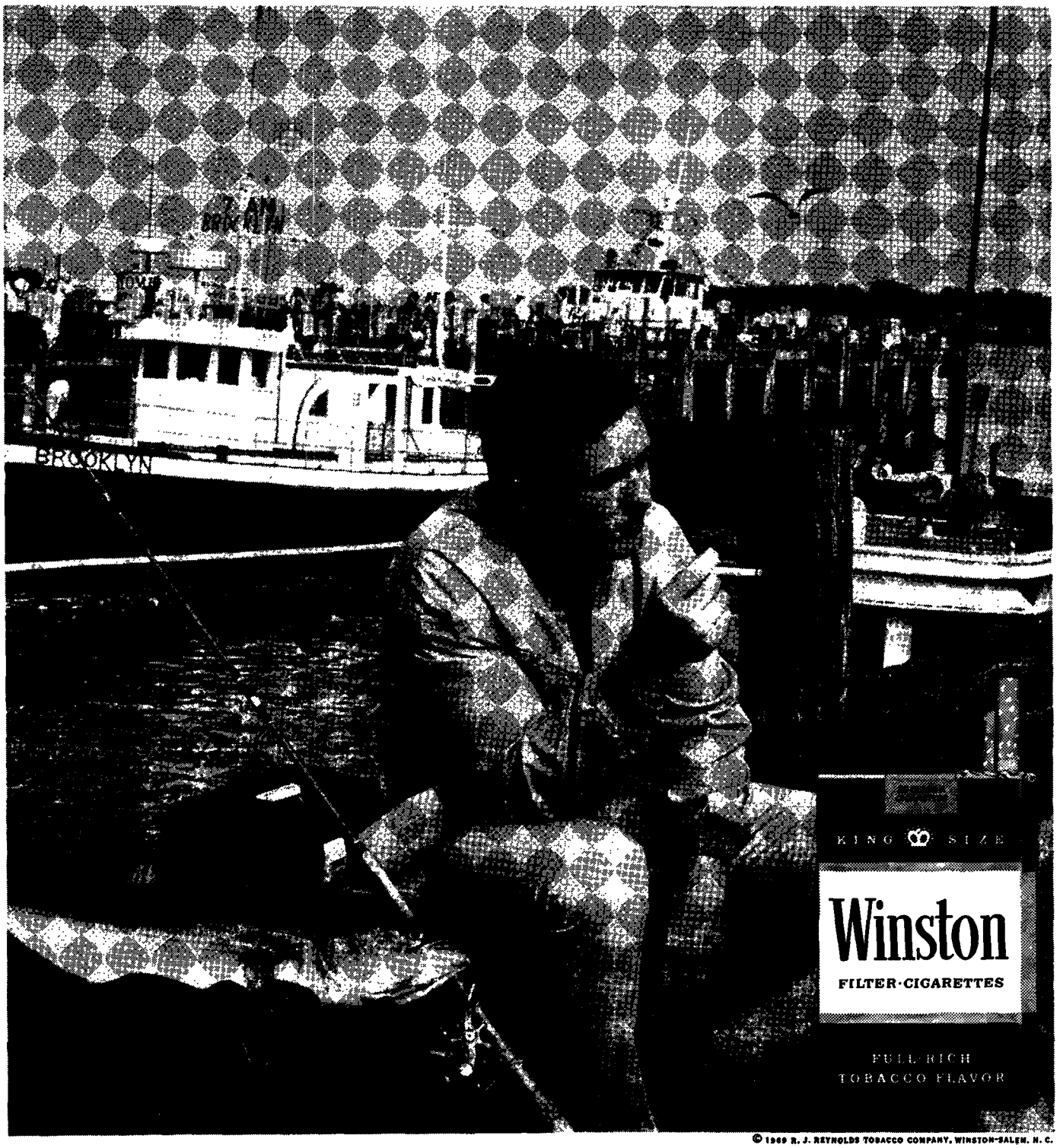

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The Politics of ABM

Aaron Wildavsky

ISSUES HAVE lives of their own. Men cannot often choose the ground on which to fight major issues; they must take what the world offers up. There is always the danger, then, that the issue will control the men, rather than the men the issue. The recent controversy over the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile is a classic case in point. Thus the advocates of ABM—people who in the past were likely to be great believers in the prevailing American doctrine of nuclear deterrence—have taken the lead in challenging that doctrine, while opponents of ABM—people more or less of the Left and previously skeptical of the same doctrine—have become ever more firmly wedded to it. Thus, too, some of those who are against ABM are willing to entertain a launch-on-warning policy (that is, a policy which would have the U.S. fire all its missiles to avoid having them destroyed in a suspected enemy attack) for the 1970's, while those who favor the ABM are bitterly opposed to such a policy. And thus, finally, some elements of the opposition to ABM have talked themselves into believing that the 1972 Presidential campaign should be run on the basis of opposition to the power of the military in the United States. One thing, however, is clear: it all began when an always precarious nuclear balance between the United States and the Soviet Union was apparently threatened by new weapons.

American strategy for deterrence is primitive. The United States seeks to have a sufficient number and diversity of nuclear weapons to guarantee that, in the event of a surprise attack by the Soviet Union, it would be able to strike back with enough force to destroy the aggressor. Since the Soviet Union also has sufficient capability to retaliate after an attack, each country is believed to be deterred from launching a surprise attack against the other by the threat of mutual destruction. It is this precarious equilibrium that Robert McNamara has called "assured destruction." No one can know for sure, of course, how much prospective damage to people and objects would actually deter a would-be aggressor. Estimating the number of casualties required is essentially a mystical enterprise, and the magic number has shifted over time. Since the Soviet Union absorbed 20 million casualties in World War II, that figure is usually considered to be the lowest tolerable point. The highest can run well over 100 million. If a successfully deterrent second strike is put at or below, say, 30 million casualties, then almost all U.S. Minuteman missiles are unnecesary because Polaris and other weapons can do the job. If, on the other hand, the number of "hostages" is set at close to 100 million, then missiles are needed, and protecting them—which is what ABM purports to do—becomes much more significant.

The ability to destroy an opponent after he has launched a first strike depends not only on the yield and accuracy of one's nuclear weapons, but on the number of different ways in which they can be delivered. If there is only one major weapons system, such as the Minuteman, there is always the chance that it will malfunction or be wiped out. American deterrence has, therefore, depended on having at least three ways of getting back at an enemy—the Minutemen in hardened silos on American soil; bombers at "soft" airfields; and Polaris submarines, with their missiles hidden in the depths of the world's oceans. Redundancy has become an essential part of nuclear defense. Yet no one can say how many separate deterrent forces are required to make certain that not all could be overwhelmed at the same time.

American deterrent forces were built to be effective under the conditions of the 1960's. In the process of raising billions of dollars to build them, the weapons were oversold to Congress and the public as relatively permanent answers to nuclear defense. The more sophisticated people involved always realized (and sometimes said in public) that no system of defense could be good for all time or even necessarily for more than a decade. But it is fair to say that these words of caution were lost. What has happened in the last few years is that the effectiveness of two of our three major deterrent systems has been called into serious question.

Of the three, manned bombers have always been the most uncertain because they can be eas-

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ily destroyed unless there is time for them to take to the air. In November 1967, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reported that the Soviet Union was developing a Fractional Orbital Bombardment System that could deliver nuclear weapons from missiles flying in low orbit around the earth. While the accuracy of such a system is poor as compared with intercontinental ballistic missiles, FOB's are more than good enough to wipe out airplanes on the ground. Their low trajectory makes it difficult to detect them with regular long-range radars; and even with newer, over-the-horizon radars, warning time is sharply reduced. In addition, manned bombers are exceedingly vulnerable to missiles launched from submarines.

In December 1967 the Department of Defense reported the development of the Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV), a system in which a single vehicle carries multiple warheads that can be maneuvered to separate targets on independent courses. President Johnson's budget message in 1969 called for expenditures to provide multiple warheads for the land-based Minuteman Three and the submarine-launched Poseidon. At the same time, Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford noted the rapid growth of the Soviet Union's force of intercontinental ballistic missiles, which he warned might equal those of the United States by 1970 and would probably have larger payloads. Were the Soviet Union to continue its present rate of deployment, and were the Soviet SS-9 missile to continue to be developed as a MIRV, there might be grounds for questioning the ability of the Minuteman to strike back.

Hence the great ABM debate. Proponents of ABM argued that by the mid-1970's the Soviet Union could have a sufficient number of MIRV's (with accuracies that the United States is capable of achieving today) to destroy about 950 of the 1,000 Minutemen. Opponents argued that the Soviet Union would be able to destroy only a much smaller number and that a sufficient proportion of Minutemen would be left to wreak unacceptable damage. The debate is hard going for even the most informed observers, and one wishes the protagonists would confront each other directly so that the differences in their assumptions and modes of analysis could be exposed.*

My purpose, however, is not to make a case for or against the ABM, or even to give a complete account of the multitude of considerations raised by each side. The books and Congressional hearings on which this essay is based contain enough of that to satisfy anyone.† Now that the Senate has decided by one vote to approve initial deployment of the ABM, rehashing the debate would in any case be anti-climactic and no more informative than it was at the time. We can learn something, I believe, by asking not who was right but why the participants adopted the positions they did. There is more, in other words, to be gained from an examination of why ABM was an issue at all than by evaluating the relative merits of the positions, although some such evaluation is necessary by way of background. Let us begin, therefore, by considering important arguments that do not matter—important because they appeared endlessly in the debate, but that did not matter because they were inherently inconclusive.

II

EVERYONE agrees that ABM is an exceedingly complex technological system. Even if it does not quite live up to Senator Edward Kennedy's advertisement of it as "the single most complex undertaking man has yet set for himself in his time on earth," the system will not be easy to build and make effective. It requires radars to look over the horizon, track incoming weapons, filter out decoys, and pass information on to other computers which are connected to the Spartan and Sprint missiles and to various command-and-control arrangements, which must guide the outgoing missiles rapidly to the target so that the incoming missiles are destroyed high enough in the atmosphere to prevent serious damage. The Spartan, whose present range is 300-500 miles, would get first crack, and the Sprint, whose range is around 25 miles, would take over as missiles got nearer their targets. In initial deployment, these Spartans and Sprints would be placed around two Minuteman complexes.

Because of its complexity, endless disputes have raged about whether the ABM can do its job or indeed whether it will ever work at all. The major argument of opponents is that defensive systems, like the ABM, are likely to fail because adequate testing is difficult if not impossible. ". . . The history of initial failures of far simpler systems suggests that the probability of catastrophic failure of a defensive ABM is quite high," says physicist Leonard Rodberg. "It is much higher, in fact, than for offensive systems, which are less intricate and more susceptible to adequate testing." The

* Fortunately, the Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations of the Senate Government Operations Committee has published the fascinating debate between Albert Wohlstetter on the pro side and George Rathjens and others on the anti side. This exchange, called "Defense Analysis: Two Examples" (Ninety-first Congress, First Session, 1969), is the best brief example of defense analysis I know.

† Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Ninety-First Congress, First Session on S. 1192, S. 2407, and S. 2546, Parts 1 and 2.

Abram Chayes and Jerome B. Wiesner, eds., *ABM, An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System*, Harper & Row, 282 pp., $5.85.

John Kenneth Galbraith, *How to Control the Military*, Doubleday, 69 pp., $3.95.

Johan J. Holst and William Schneider, Jr., ed., *Why ABM? Policy Issues in the Missile Defense Controversy*, Pergamon Press, 320 pp., $6.95.

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advocates of ABM respond by saying that "no strategic weapons system can be tested realistically in a nuclear war environment whether the system is defensive or offensive." If we are to be around to observe the results, they contend, analysis of nuclear war must proceed without testing in the real environment. But even if it is not desirable to test a system under realistic conditions, proponents of ABM believe it is still possible to take precautions. "If I am concerned at my summer home about being attacked by a mountain lion," Dr. Frederick Seitz said in defense of ABM, "I can go through a great deal of significant preparatory work. I can test cartridges in the basement. I can fire blanks in a gun, and be pretty sure that the system will work, if a mountain lion appears. I don't need to acquire a mountain lion, and have him attack me as an initial test."

In the time-honored tradition of finding counter-examples, Professor Abram Chayes arrived at a different conclusion. "If I were buying a gun to defend my house against burglars, and half the gun experts I talked to told me it wouldn't shoot, and I knew I couldn't try it out until the burglars got there, I think I would start looking around for some other way to protect my house." By now, the nature of the discussion should be clear to everyone. If you believe in the desirability of the ABM for other reasons, then you believe it will, must, and can be made to work. If you decide for other reasons that the ABM is undesirable, then you attempt to show that it cannot and will not work.

How does a decision-maker without technical expertise make a decision when those who should know are so divided? Since he cannot go into the technical problem, he may decide by placing confidence in the advice of men whom he trusts most, perhaps because their policy preferences are generally similar to his own. Argument by authority is not helpful in public, however, because there are so many eminent men on both sides. So the disputants search for historical experience that will appear relevant and accessible to laymen. What does history teach? The proponents of ABM say history teaches that the preponderance of scientists said the H-bomb could not be developed and they were wrong. They point to the outstanding success with complex missions involving interacting technologies, such as Polaris and Apollo. They observe that in the past scientists have been surprised at how rapidly systems considered impossible came into being. Dr. Seitz mentions television, radar, jet aircraft, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and so on. The other side has no difficulty in finding its examples of failures from the Maginot Line, all-weather interceptors, the Distance Early Warning line, Skybolt, and more. What history has to teach us, apparently, is that complex systems often do not work but that sometimes they do and, in addition, that it is very difficult to tell in advance which of these two categories a weapons system belongs in.

One way to resolve the question is to agree with Abram Chayes that ". . . there is an inherent advantage for the side that deploys last. If the offense can see the characteristics of the ABM system ranged against it, it can adopt the tactics best able to overcome that particular system." If your opponent attacks you, of course, before you are ready to respond to a new system, then you are in trouble. There is no system, Albert Wohlstetter remarks, about which it cannot be said, ". . . you can always get something better if you wait." But the argument can be turned around: instead of waiting, perhaps the best way to get information about whether a system will work is to try it. Opponents of ABM would not regard this response as satisfactory.

THROUGHOUT the debate on the ABM there has been a swirl of contention about the relative costs of offense and defense. The point has been made, for instance, that the Soviet Union could always build more offensive missiles to negate the defensive value of the ABM. But the point is irrelevant; if enough money is spent, any offense can overcome a defense, and any defense an offense. The question remains how much each will cost, and—even more critical—what is the presumed advantage of offense over defense per dollar spent. The Chayes-Wiesner group contend that "the offense problem is simpler than that of defense, because ICBMs are pretargeted, and they do not have to be aimed within a few moments of launch on the basis of recently acquired target data. Moreover, the timing of the launch is not critical with offensive weapons, unlike the ABM, which must be able to respond on call against a target approaching at seventy-two hundred miles per hour."

Similar considerations, however, can be adduced to support the alleged advantages of a defensive system. In an effort to even out the debate, Albert Wohlstetter has stated that "an increment in defense offsets a larger increment in offense because the defense of missiles doesn't require defending all missiles and one can choose which silos to defend. . . . Moreover the defense can choose that at the last minute. The defense has the last move in this sort of a system, whereas the offense cannot know which one is going to be chosen and therefore must attack all." Freeman Dyson takes the position that defensive forces eventually will triumph because they are situated much closer to the scene of action and can adapt more quickly than offensive forces, which must make their moves thousands of miles away and attempt to exert control over incredibly long distances. Here again, as in the dispute over the technical operability of the ABM, we have a clash of rival intuitions that has its interest as such,

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but is of no real help to anyone trying to make up his mind on an important issue.

In a similar category belongs the dispute over the efficacy of penetration aids, such as decoys and metal chaff, that are designed to confuse radar and thus render an ABM system useless. People who are against ABM claim that it would be relatively easy for the Chinese, not to mention the Russians, to develop simple and cheap penetration aids that would negate high-altitude defense. Supporters of ABM point out that the United States has spent several billion dollars on penetration aids, and experience has shown that they are difficult to devise and deploy. They conclude that the Chinese will have great trouble along these lines, but that countermeasures against Russian efforts are feasible and desirable. To this their opponents reply that one never can tell but what the clever Chinese will make something that American designers have not thought of.

A more interesting charge against the ABM is that its deployment would result in shifting the power to make life-and-death decisions from the President to low-level technicians, or even from persons to machines. By the time the President got warning of incoming missiles there might be anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes in which to make a decision. If there is to be any certainty of response, some people believe that the actual decision will have to be made by the men in charge of operating Safeguard or by the computers on which they rely. "The point is not," Bill Moyers writes,

> that under these or any other circumstances the President relinquishes the actual command decisions—he does not—but that the option when it reaches him is almost no option at all. If the system is to have any chance of intercepting actual enemy missiles, it is difficult to see how the President can avoid surrendering his decision-making authority to the computers and the junior military officers who stand over them. The command decision becomes little more than a hurried human reflex, devoid of political and moral consideration, to confirm what the machines say is inevitable.

This statement appears plausible until one considers what the situation would be if there were no ABM. What would a President of the United States do if word reached him that a number of intercontinental ballistic missiles were approaching the United States? Advocates insist that ABM would better enable the United States to ride out an attack with some assurance that there would be enough left with which to respond. There would then be no need to make a precipitate decision that might turn out to begin nuclear war by mistake. "Deciding to launch our ICBM might be the most important decision that will ever have been made," Albert Wohlstetter told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "That is the decision for World War III. I do not want to decide that on radar data. I can think of ways such data might be spurious." The choice, then, is between two kinds of errors: the error that results in sending up an ABM that will explode at high altitude over or near our own country; and the error that will send nuclear missiles winging their way to destroy a large part of the Soviet population, touching off a wave of retaliation, if the Soviets had not intended (or had not launched) an attack in the first place.

ANOTHER REASON given for rejecting ABM is that it would make a future arms-control agreement more difficult. ABM would add another item to be negotiated, thus increasing the complexity of an already tortuous series of negotiations. As the Russians already have an ABM, however, it is hard to see how this matter can be left out of the negotiations. And in any case, one might think that opponents of the ABM, having insisted that it is too complex to work, should have no reason to believe that the Soviet Union would feel compelled to take countermeasures against it. But ABM opponents say that the Russians will have to *believe* that the system might work and therefore will take precautions against it by increasing the size of their missile force, thus further inhibiting the prospects of an arms-control agreement.

It should come as no surprise that advocates of ABM believe on the other hand that the system will make a positive contribution toward arms control. One of the important barriers to any arms-control agreement is the number of parties who refuse to join. By improving the possibilities for effective defense against lesser powers, ABM, according to its supporters, will enhance the chances for concluding arms-control agreements without the participation of those lesser powers—the more so since the possession of ABM systems by the two superpowers would enable them to relax a little about minor violations.

My own conclusion is that deploying the Safeguard ABM would complicate the arms-control negotiations in some ways and make them easier in others, and that it is not easy to draw the balance. The kind of decision required may be illustrated by analogy to problems concerned with the nuclear test-ban treaty. The unrelenting march of technology always makes it possible for someone to claim that new developments will invalidate the safeguards that exist and hence the value of the agreement, and the fact that there are already dangers that presently cannot be guarded against reduces the prospect of agreement still further. Yet a reasonable man might risk a bet on future American technology. Rather than permitting underground testing, for instance, simply because there were no existing ways of indirect detection (and the Soviets would

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not allow on-site inspection), I would have preferred taking the risk that, given sufficient motivation, the United States could develop the necessary technology. In the ABM case, a belief that the system is essential would quickly resolve the technological doubts in its favor. Thus the question is not merely one of technology, unless there are strong scientific reasons for believing that the development is impossible *in principle;* rather, the question is one of assessing the technological probabilities and deciding the direction in which we wish to take our risks.

People on both sides of the debate have succumbed to the "funny numbers" syndrome. These are arguments that are constructed in such a way that neither the ABM nor any other system could ever be rejected or, alternatively, approved on the basis of them. Professor Edward Teller, for instance, observes that "the first year of the 'Safeguard' deployment will cost only one half as much as we spend on defense in one week." Since almost all systems have low initial costs, it is hard to think of one that would have been ruled out by this approach; besides, if defense expenditures were drastically reduced, the amount allocated to Safeguard would turn out to be a larger proportion of the whole. Phyllis Schlafly, co-author of three books on nuclear strategy, *The Grave Diggers, Strike from Space,* and *The Betrayers,* brings to our attention the fact that the Safeguard ABM "will cost only $8 per person per year. Isn't your life worth $8 per year?" she asks with admirable restraint.

On the opposite side of the argument, we encounter talk of the lives that could be saved and the human spirits that could be nurtured if the money to be spent on ABM were devoted to other purposes. The lists that have been drawn up include the "10 million Americans [who] go to bed hungry each night; 26 million [who] live in abject poverty; . . . polluted streams and air, housing, education, transportation. . . ." Of course, anyone who loves the outdoors and wishes to spend money to keep nature in an unspoiled condition must also feel ashamed that his programs will divert funds from widows and orphans.

Finally, John Kenneth Galbraith has found an infallible way of winning the debate over ABM—he simply categorizes everyone who might conceivably be on the other side as a member of the "Military-Industrial Complex." He includes not only military officers, civilians in the Pentagon, defense contractors, members of the Armed Services Committees, but also ". . . the university scientists and those in such defense-oriented organizations as RAND, the Institute for Defense Analyses, and the Hudson Institute who think professionally about weapons and weapons systems and the strategy of their use." Just to make sure he has cast the net wide enough, Galbraith also includes social scientists who "responded eagerly to invitations to spend the summer at RAND. They devoted their winters to seminars on the strategy of defense and deterrence. The only question was whether a man could get a high enough security clearance."

Unfortunately for Galbraith's point, if it were not for the fact that research institutes and universities have spread knowledge of defense policy around the country, it would have been difficult to have a debate on the ABM at all. Indeed, the ABM issue is the only one involving strategic forces in the past decade that was not brought to public attention by disputes within the military services, but rather by "defense intellectuals," and the most impressive arguments on *both* sides have been advanced by these same intellectuals. Galbraith, however, has covered his tracks: all one has to do in order to win an exit visa from the Military-Industrial Complex is to denounce the ABM.

There are, of course, many different phenomena that go under the name of the Military-Industrial Complex. There is reason to be concerned about the large number of ex-Pentagon employees who work for defense contractors, and the difficulties inherent in close and intelligent Congressional supervision of military programs are deserving of scrutiny and debate. More serious still in my opinion, though never mentioned, is the fascination of the general public with hardware and technological solutions to complex human problems. The rush on all sides to exclaim that the Apollo moonshot proves that the United States can solve any problem on which it sets its mind is but a recent reminder. But these and other problems cannot be solved by using MIC as a mindless slogan with which to castigate one's enemies. If the people who use it really believed in its full implications, there would in fact be no need for them to debate the merits of individual projects. They could just oppose anything and everything supported by the military on *a priori* grounds.

III

THE ABM has several potential uses . . . and abuses. It can be used as a defensive weapon to protect the Minuteman deterrent. It can protect against a small attack from China or any other power in possession of only a few deliverable nuclear weapons. And it may be emplaced around cities in an attempt to reduce civilian casualties in the event of nuclear war. The variety of uses to which an ABM might be put has occasioned dispute within the defense community and has resulted in different emphases being placed upon different purposes at different times. Unable to decide whether an ABM designed simply to protect cities was justified, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara came out for a defensive system, allegedly to protect against Chinese attack. The Nixon

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administration at first adopted a city-defense objective, called Sentinel, and then turned to the present Safeguard whose objective is to protect part of the Minuteman deterrent force. Yet any one of these uses can be converted into any other. The second stage of Safeguard, for example, will have some modest city-defense capability since it must cover a substantial area of the United States in order to perform its primary mission.

The shifts and turns in the history of the ABM have interacted with the pre-existing anxieties of its opponents to produce an atmosphere of maximum distrust. The anomalies introduced by the change of objectives I have just described, together with the impossibility of adequately distinguishing one from another, have served to infuriate opponents of the ABM. What were they to think when the administration, which initially proposed the ABM to protect against an improbable Chinese attack, then offered to give it up if the Russians gave up theirs? The suspicion soon grew that the idea was to have the ABM no matter what the reason; rationales were seen as pure window-dressing. Thus, a long-time supporter of the defense program like Senator Stuart Symington could speak of "this new and pretty tricky sudden shift from the cities to the missile sites."

The way in which the ABM issue arose gave its detractors a special political opportunity. After the Sentinel ABM was proposed, and immediate efforts were undertaken to select sites for deployment of the Sprint and Spartan missiles near major cities, there was a political uproar reminiscent of the debate over civil defense in President Kennedy's time. In those days the Left was outraged at increasing militarism and the ludicrous idea that a defense was possible against nuclear weapons. The Right was briefly interested, but eventually decided that the whole thing was cowardly and that offense rather than defense should be emphasized. Despite the conviction expressed at the time that industrial firms, which stood to make billions from having us all burrow underground, would therefore secure a decision to proceed, virtually no support materialized for civil defense and it died.

The Sentinel ABM apparently generated just such a negative reaction among the people it was supposedly designed to protect. Hence it began to appear that there would be wider political opposition to the Sentinel than would normally be the case in matters of military policy and that ABM, therefore, might become an issue on which to take a stand against militarism. Just as many people began to get committed to turning the proposed ABM into a major political issue, however, the Nixon administration changed its line; the program was renamed Safeguard and was directed toward defense of the Minuteman deterrent force. By removing the ABM sites from the cities, where they caused alarm and could be criticized as an attempt to protect the populace prior to an attack on the Soviet Union, the administration reduced the opportunity to make a good political issue out of ABM. By that time, however, the opponents were both angry and committed and began to pick up every rock they could find to throw at the proposal.

The most apparent rationale for opposing the Safeguard ABM is lack of trust in the military. It is perhaps not surprising that an organization like Women Strike for Peace should commit itself "to defeat the ABM and to attempt to turn the country away from the tide of militarism before it is too late." But when the Governor of North Dakota says, ". . . our nation is swept along by contrived hysteria to keep the pipeline of the defense industries full," the defense establishment is obviously in trouble. Evidently, the lesson learned from the Vietnam war has been that the judgment of the military (even when supported by the President) should be questioned everywhere. One should always be as skeptical of the claims of government as of declarations of love, promises of eternal peace, assurances of investment profits, or any other relationship where ego, self-interest, and uncertainty are involved.

But one cannot challenge everything at once. Learning where and when to trust will be difficult. From World War II the U.S. learned to arm itself in order to secure peace. It was wise, Americans thought, to intervene before little wars became big ones and little dictators thought of world conquest. The Vietnam experience apparently teaches us that if a nation has arms it may use them and small wars may become large if big countries are involved. The trouble is that the United States seems capable of learning only one lesson at a time—"look before you leap" (Vietnam) supplants "he who hesitates is lost" (Munich)—when what needs to be asked is under which conditions these proverbial lessons apply.

SINCE THERE IS little trust, anger at alleged deception is always near the surface. While many opponents of the ABM like to think of themselves as apostles of change, they argue that nothing has happened in the last few years to alter the requirements for nuclear defense. Senator Edward M. Kennedy, for example, writes in his introduction to *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System*: "Our nuclear forces are so large, and so sophisticated, that they would deter an enemy from attacking us while we sought an arms limitation agreement with the Soviets over some predetermined period, just as they have deterred our enemies over all the years of the nuclear age." The same line is taken by Theodore Sorensen, who asserts: "Having assured the West Europeans for some years that, even after suffering a first strike, we possessed a second-strike capacity

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of weapons systems in the ground, underwater, or in the air sufficient to destroy any attacker several times over, we will have a difficult task convincing them now that an ABM system is needed to make this deterrent effective." After a decade in which billions have been spent on nuclear weapons, it galls the critics of ABM to hear others claim that the expenditures were not good for an indefinite future. It seems more likely to them that as the war in Vietnam is—one hopes—being phased out, new excuses are being found to replenish military expenditure.

The climate of opinion in the United States, however, is still such that arguments have to be phrased in terms of advocacy of national defense. No one can win broad support by saying he wants to leave the nation defenseless. So the opponents of ABM must worry about our nuclear deterrent and they must have alternatives to ABM in case the deterrent should be threatened. In order to avoid what they consider the overriding present evil—a useless ABM that will divert billions from domestic uses and strengthen the military politically—they are easily led into excessive reliance on a strategy of assured destruction. Under this doctrine the superpowers would maintain large arsenals of intercontinental ballistic missiles and make no persuasive efforts to defend their own populations; thus, each nation's people becomes hostage for its own good behavior. The attraction of assured destruction as a strategy is that it would appear to result in a nuclear standoff while ruling out all sorts of fanciful and expensive ways of making believe that the nation might render itself safe in the face of nuclear weapons.

The adherents of assured destruction (under which the total vulnerability of the U.S. and the Soviet Union to attack by each other is the guarantor of peace) see every move to increase defensive facilities as a trick to unleash an offensive holocaust. What unimaginable things might an American government not do, they ask, if civil defense or an ABM gave it the idea that it could escape total destruction in a nuclear war? Then the vast urge for destruction in a people prone to violence might spill out and engulf the world. The image of America as a modern dinosaur, with an incredible technical arsenal and a pea-sized brain, comes to the fore. For this image the adherents of assured destruction would substitute that of a man asking his friends, half in terror and half in exaltation, to hold him back lest he commit an act of murder, so great is his deep-seated potential for violence; such is the emotive level of those who believe that for America the only guarantee of national morality lies in being defenseless. This profound lack of trust in a whole people long antedates Vietnam and suggests that any effort at defense would meet with fierce opposition.

But, an advocate of ABM might ask, how would a policy of assured destruction work in practice? Imagine that a nuclear missile is coming. What can the United States do? The proponents of assured destruction say that the United States is capable of a devastating attack on the Soviet Union no matter what happens. Yet that would not stop the missile, and the President is not to be envied who might have to explain why, though he knew missiles were coming, strategic doctrine required that he have no means of intercepting them.

This and other challenges to the doctrine of assured destruction have been put forward by many of the authors represented in *Why ABM?*, a volume published by the Hudson Institute. These men regard mutual suicide as an unsatisfactory basis for national defense; they advocate a different theory of deterrence, calling for substantial ballistic-missile defense by the superpowers together with phased reductions in offensive missiles, which are defined as missiles that can reach the other country. Such a policy could vastly reduce the incentives for third powers to get nuclear weapons and to engage in nuclear blackmail. It would also reduce damage in case of accident or a breakdown of deterrence. It would not, probably, reduce the chances of nuclear war below the present posture of mutual annihilation but it would not markedly increase them either. Should some temporary breakdown in deterrence occur, it would be possible to limit damage and have somebody around to learn the lesson and push for more complete disarmament.

IT SHOULD BE pointed out that responsible opponents of ABM never say that they do not care about protecting the deterrent. On the contrary, they care very much. "I think," Abram Chayes says, "if the Soviet threat should materialize along the lines projected by Secretary Laird, which I believe to be unlikely, and if the strategic arms-control talks fail, we then will have to consider very urgently the goal of protecting our deterrent." Nevertheless, these opponents would still wish to have an alternative to ABM should the Soviets appear in the late 1970's to be able to destroy a very large proportion of Minutemen. According to Herbert York, if we think that two years are available before the period of maximum danger, more Minutemen can be deployed. If four years is a more feasible time period, the number of Polaris submarines could also be increased.

The difficulty with these alternatives is that they would vastly increase the amount of American destructive power and hence might exacerbate Soviet fears of a possible surprise attack. Should the danger period be numbered in terms of weeks, it is possible to go on airborne alert, but this posture would be prohibitively expensive over a longer period of time. These alternatives to ABM, therefore, are either limited, un-

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feasible, or would tend to increase markedly the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the anxiety of the major powers.

Those who believe that the United States should defend its Minutemen with ABM state that their policy is designed to avoid the worst strategic alternative—launching missiles before they have a chance to be destroyed. Professor Richard Rosecrance insists that:

> We *should* defend Minuteman because we ourselves could respond in escalatory and undesirable ways if we fail to reinsure Minuteman's invulnerability to attack. Imagine a situation in which the BMEWS radars give indication of an incoming attack on our land-based forces. And surely Minuteman is what the SS-9's would shoot at. One can imagine enormous pressure upon an American President to launch Minuteman before the incoming warheads land on target. He might or might not yield to that pressure. But he would know that if he did not launch Minuteman within approximately 20 minutes and the radar warning was accurate, he could expect a very large proportion, between 90-99 per cent, of the force to be destroyed in their silos. Under these circumstances it would not be surprising if he authorized launch of Minuteman. Such a decision would certainly result in saving Minuteman, but if the radar indications were erroneous, the measures taken by the President to protect our force could have catastrophic consequences for our own society.

However incredible the idea of a launch-on-warning posture may appear, it too has seriously been mentioned as an alternative to ABM. Jerome Wiesner, for example, writes:

> However, if one is truly worried about a full-scale SS-9 attack, it is possible to launch the Minuteman and Titan missiles after unequivocal warning of a large attack is received but before the attacking missiles have hit. The missile warning could be associated with other knowledge, such as information about attacks on bomber bases, Polaris submarines, etc., to provide confirmation that an attack is really under way.

The most feasible immediate alternative to ABM would be the superhardening of existing Minuteman sites. The trouble here is that we do not know the precise effectiveness of hardening much beyond present levels, and in any case as missiles became more and more accurate, whatever effectiveness hardening might have would be rapidly diminished. What the advocates of ABM dislike about hardening—it cannot be easily expanded or adapted—is exactly what the opponents like about it. It is a limited response to a limited threat.

Who could have foretold that eminent spokesmen for peace would seriously contemplate a launch-on-warning policy, or would pledge themselves to rush into huge provocations in the 1970's if a Soviet threat materializes, or would glory in the vulnerability of the populace as a guarantor of restraint? Indeed we have a case here of men being controlled by an issue.

IV

We come now to perhaps the most interesting question of all: why did the ABM debate turn into one of *the* major domestic issues of the decade? The principal reason, in my opinion, is that the debate lent itself to manipulation by people whose primary political interests lay elsewhere—specifically, in bringing the Vietnam war to an end and in opposing on general grounds high defense expenditures. These people had perceived, no doubt correctly, that a major conflict over funds to support the war, or a direct assault on the military men involved, would be politically ineffective. (Despite the evident unpopularity of our engagement in Vietnam, there appears to be no good way of making a political issue out of funds denied to American men under fire.) What the ABM debate offered, quite simply, was a temporary tactical opportunity to test whether opposition to military influence in American life was a sufficiently powerful issue on which to base a successful Presidential campaign.

John Kenneth Galbraith's volume, *How to Control the Military*, is quite explicit on this point. "The goal, all must remember," Galbraith insists, "is to get all military power under firm political control. This means electing a President on this issue next time. This, above all," he repeats, lest we forget so soon, "must be the issue in the next election." If it were up to him, there would be "an organization alert to the military power" in virtually every Congressional district that would exact specific promises from candidates "to resist military programs."

Now, the idea of a campaign based on opposition to the military is open to criticism on several counts. A theorist of public opinion, for example, without recourse to actual evidence, might predict that an issue like ABM would not be understood by most voters. The minority of the population who felt they knew something about the matter, moreover, would probably be taken from the better educated portion of the electorate that is traditionally Republican and conservative, and hence would most likely be in favor of military programs in general. All the polls would bear this prediction out. In addition, while there is probably general agreement that defense expenditures are too high, this is not equivalent to support for a holy war against the military profession. To his personal credit, Galbraith says that his "is not an anti-military crusade. Generals and admirals, and soldiers, sailors, and airmen are not the object of attack. The purpose is to return the military establishment to its traditional position in the American political system."

Yet however laudable the distinction, it is cer-

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tain to be lost. The attack is bound to become vague and vulgar, and the response equally if not more so. Does Galbraith have a candidate to lead the unpatriotic party? Will this candidate wish to spend his time explaining why he reviles the sacrifices of American men in arms? We love our servicemen, he will say, it is just that we hate all the things they do. This line might go over big in some circles but not, I think, in any part of the electorate not already convinced. The strategy would be a disaster at the polls, especially since there is unlikely now to be a Kennedy whose personal popularity might have been so great as to give the appearance that the anti-military thesis was accepted by a majority of voters. No one really knows what elections mean in terms of specific issues, but they can be made to mean things that voters have hardly contemplated. If an election is ostensibly lost on the issue of military influence, would that mean that generals and admirals had public license to pursue any policy they saw fit?

The most certain result of an anti-military election strategy would be to lay the groundwork for the further politicization of the American military. Whatever else one might say about military officials in the United States, they have not organized to thwart direct and explicit civilian commands because of their alienation from a hateful system of government. But if they should become pilloried in public as the scapegoats for an entire nation's tragedy, military men would, in effect, be given moral sanction to enter politics en masse to defend themselves against attack. That would be an exceedingly high price to pay for a losing campaign issue.

Presidential campaigns aside, however, we should also consider the probable reaction of military men to the actual positions taken by ABM opponents—dedication to a policy of assured destruction, rejection of defensive systems, and vociferous attacks on the defense establishment. In the face of such concerted antagonism, the strategy of the military and its right-wing allies will undoubtedly be to wait, as they have many times before, for an immediate danger to appear and then to press for an all-out response. If they cannot get part of what they want in advance of a crisis, they will use the crisis to get all they can.

In the United States it only takes one man to make an issue—the President. It is difficult to have a major issue without his participation. Yet instead of running away from conflict over ABM, the President started it. Why did he help make an issue that was bound to stir up antagonism toward the military? One reason is that the Nixon administration did not expect that ABM would become the major issue it turned out to be. If MIRV and this year's Vietnam budget had not caused widespread criticism, there was no reason to expect that ABM would. The administration failed to realize that many Americans who might trust the President to deal with foreign affairs would withdraw that trust in regard to ABM because ballistic missile defense would be seen by them as a domestic matter. It is all right, apparently, to build missiles that threaten havoc abroad (and therefore at home) but not to emplace defensive missiles near cities that will remind people of the potentialities for disaster.

The decision to proceed with deployment of the Safeguard ABM was a political mistake for the nation. Nixon should have realized that his foreign policy will remain mortgaged to the Vietnam war as long as that conflict continues, and that he cannot subject the nation to controversy without opening the floodgates of recrimination. A year's delay in deployment now might have adverse effects on the nation's nuclear deterrent in the mid-1970's, but everything has a price, and the cost of Vietnam has to be paid out until the mortgage is lifted by substantial troop withdrawals.

THE ABM debate has followed Gresham's law: bad arguments drive out good ones. There is still time, however, to talk about critical issues, like halting deployment of MIRV in an arms-control agreement and sharply reducing expenditures of the general purpose forces. Most important of all, the nation's current strategic doctrine—assured destruction—should be given the closest scrutiny.

If the United States continues to rely on a doctrine of assured destruction, the prospect of losing that assurance in time of crisis will be immensely threatening. After all, ABM might not work, and it is possible that hardening of the missile sites will not work either; neither can be tested under actual circumstances. What we do know how to do, all too well, is build more Poseidon and Minuteman missiles with multiple warheads, and if we feel our lives threatened we may be pressed into doing all the things we know how to do as quickly (and as expensively) as possible. In the 1980's we might then come to look back upon the period from 1965 to 1975 as one in which modestly hopeful efforts were undertaken to deal with urgent domestic problems before they were swamped entirely by an overwhelming concern with national survival.

Should the ABM debate lead to a consideration of these issues, and to a complete reassessment of American deterrence policy, it may finally be seen to have been to the good. So far, however, the debate has resulted not in public enlightenment but in a heightened disposition on the part of Americans to blame one another for real and imagined errors in public policy. If the debate leads to continued indiscriminate attacks on the military, coupled with an unquestioning belief in the policy of assured destruction, it will manage what no event except for Vietnam has done—it will combine foreign and domestic disaster.

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Is There a New Republican Majority?

Andrew Hacker

IT IS NOT easy to argue that Richard Nixon's election marks a revival of Republican fortunes. While he need not apologize for entering the White House with less than a popular majority—after all, Abraham Lincoln, Harry Truman, and John Kennedy shared that distinction—his is nevertheless the smallest plurality any candidate has mustered since 1912. Moreover, he failed to carry a Republican Congress on his coattails; and his campaign showed no success at all in inducing dissident Democrats to change their registrations. Gallup's latest survey could only find 30 per cent of the electorate willing to call themselves Republican, hardly a popular base for a party entering a new era.

As a participant-observer of Republican persuasion—I confess to having voted for Nixon four times—I pay more attention than most to plans and prescriptions for improving my party's performance. However, just recently, and for the first time in almost twenty years of GOP-gazing, I have seen an analysis which rises above wishful thinking. Kevin Phillips, currently a young assistant to the incumbent Attorney General, believes that our country now possesses an "emerging Republican majority." His book* may or may not be mistitled—only the next few years will tell for sure—but his argument deserves serious attention, if only because its major premises may guide future Republican campaigns.

At the same time, Phillips's proposals should be seen as the end-product of a generation-old dialectic within the GOP, and I think it important to take a page or two to set the stage for what he has to say. The Republicans' problem has been their propensity for second place in most elections most of the time over the past 39 years. For the great Sisyphean rock remains the Democratic registration roll, which has held its majority ranking for more than a generation. In every election, the GOP's candidates must start their seductions from scratch: Democratic defections simply do not carry over from one contest to another. Hence the perennial quest for one or another bloc of voters who can be uprooted from the Democratic weedbed and transplanted in Republican loam.

If nothing else, the Republican malaise has been of benefit to the publishing industry: in politics, as elsewhere, there is something about a loser which appeals to authors; and my five-foot shelf of party books has at least four volumes on the GOP for every one about the Democrats. Louis Harris started the ball rolling a decade and a half ago by spending 231 pages asking, *Is There a Republican Majority*? Eisenhower had just received 55 per cent of the vote, and was to do even better on his second time around. Yet he made no Republican converts. "The key elements in the Eisenhower majority are by and large a new breed of political independents," Harris wrote. The swing-voters Harris had in mind were sensible suburban types, grown too sophisticated to settle for Main Street maxims or Prairie pieties of the Robert Taft variety. Harris therefore suggested a "moderate, middle-of-the-road" course as the best way for the GOP to woo marginal voters who give candidates their eventual majorities. The Harris theory has worked in Senate and gubernatorial races, especially on the two coasts where Thomas Kuchel, Clifford Case, Hugh Scott, Mark Hatfield, Edward Brooke, and a dozen or so other liberal-leaning Republicans adopted postures having independent appeal. But it didn't work for Richard Nixon in 1960.

Nixon's 1960 campaign was not at all Neanderthal. (Indeed his major domestic difference with John Kennedy was that he favored spending federal funds on school construction, whereas Kennedy wanted money for teachers' salaries as well as buildings.) While it has been customary to point out that Nixon came within two-tenths of a percentage point of the Presidency that year, my own view is that he was lucky to have done as well as he did. The real trouble is that "moderation" can end up as "me-too-ism"; and, as Wendell Willkie and Thomas Dewey learned, voters tend to prefer the real article. If Nixon's defeat consigned Harris's handbook to the remainder counters, it spurred Republican printing presses into two directions.

Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Con-*

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* *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Arlington House, 482 pp., $7.95.

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servative and Phyllis Schlafly's *A Choice Not an Echo* were more than exercises in economic orthodoxy and anti-Communist ideology: they also proposed a novel strategy for Republican revival. A third of all adult Americans never bestir themselves to the polls, an apathy social scientists have usually attributed to the inability of lower-class citizens to see elections as relevant to their lives. The Goldwater forces took a different view, and not simply because they suspected anything social scientists said. To their eyes, most of the stay-at-homes were true-blue conservatives unwilling to waste their time choosing between Tweedledee and another egg. Give them a real choice—an opportunity to vote for a principled conservative—and they would flock to the polls, bringing Republican strength well over the majority mark. If evidence were needed, one had only to look at Arizona, where Goldwater himself won successive victories by uncovering hitherto hidden sentiments. In 1964, Goldwater carried Arizona again. And Alabama and Georgia and Louisiana and South Carolina and Mississippi. And that was all. The theory was wrong.

So to Nixon's nomination last year, and his less-than-auspicious showing against a decimated and dispirited Democratic party. And hence the earlier-than-usual appearance of new programs for Republican resuscitation. Predictably enough, some are suggesting that moderate Republicanism be given another chance. The most active moderate publicity-mill is the Ripon Society, whose offices off Harvard Square have over the last several years issued a steady stream of position papers on subjects ranging from Ronald Reagan and Cuban refugees to Selective Service and the military-industrial complex. All are intelligently written, handsomely produced, and largely unread by the Republican rank-and-file. Though the Society sends its releases to a large mailing-list, it seems to carry on without meetings or members. I have reason to believe that Nelson Rockefeller mails them a five-figure check every so often, an amount sufficient for his and their purposes.

The Lessons of Victory,* put together by 17 young men on the Ripon payroll, argues that Nixon's victory was nothing to boast about. In many parts of the country the party fared worse than in 1960, and anyone unconnected with the Johnson-Humphrey record would probably have won. The authors are pretty well persuaded that Nixon is still the same old Nixon, reminding us that even in last year's campaign he "assured his audiences that Johnson and Humphrey were not traitors on so many occasions that he created the impression that he expected people to think they were." Yet what really annoys the Ripon authors is their party's paranoia about anything new: "At many rallies, including Nixon's climactic appearance at Madison Square Garden on Halloween night, anyone wearing a beard was systematically turned away." Hence their proposal that the GOP should make a pitch not only to enlightened suburbanites (especially those who "admired Eugene McCarthy's integrity") but also to black voters and union members. They are upset that Nixon attracted only 750,000 black votes and that only one union delegate (the Glass Blowers' president) was at Miami.

This approach *has* succeeded—on the state level. In addition to the old stand-bys—Javits, Case, Percy, et al.—those of the Ripon persuasion can point to new Senatorial entrants such as Charles Mathias, William Saxbe, and Robert Packwood, who ran ahead of Nixon in Maryland, Ohio, and Oregon last year. The real difficulty is that moderate Republicanism has not been able to make much headway when the party foregathers to nominate its national candidates. The treatment accorded Nelson Rockefeller and George Romney at recent GOP conventions shows clearly that the sorts of people chosen as Republican delegates simply will not settle for a candidate to the Left of Nixon. Nor can it be claimed that the last several conventions have been unrepresentative of rank-and-file Republican opinion: as an insider I will attest that recent proceedings have mirrored grassroots GOP sentiment as perfectly as any gathering can.

About midway through *The Lessons of Victory* the authors ask, "What accounted for Richard Milhous Nixon's plurality in 1968?" "The reason," they tell us, "is quite simple: the middle class got bigger." This is true. The American middle class has been expanding, and from its attitudes and aspirations may be deduced a good deal of the nation's political future. However, I am not at all persuaded that the Ripon writers know as much as they should about the character and composition of this social stratum. It is true they are well-acquainted with the suburbs that sported McCarthy bumper-stickers, but middle-class America also extends into precincts seldom visited by moderate Republicans. Kevin Phillips understands this terrain far better than the Ripon Society ever will, and therein lies the force of his appeal for a far different kind of Republican reconstruction.

THOUGH A graduate of Harvard Law School, Phillips writes less as a Harvard man and more as a boy from the Bronx. But the upper, semi-suburban, reaches of that borough: the Bronx of Mario Procaccino and Paul Fino—homeowning, church-going, and uneasy over its association with the larger city. If most Harvard graduates never go home again—after all, their law degree is a ticket to new ambitions and eminences—Phillips returned to the Bronx where he spent four years as assistant to Fino, the borough's only Republican Congress-

* Dial, 411 pp., $6.95.

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man. He caught John Mitchell's eye early in Nixon's 1968 campaign, largely because of his shrewdness with statistics and his aptitude for electoral analysis, both of which are fully evident in *The Emerging Republican Majority*. If like others before him he attempts to show how the GOP can recruit new adherents, he relies less on casual observations and more on the 200 maps and tables he deploys in the course of his countrywide canvass. It is an impressive exercise and a plain-spoken application of social science to a real political problem.*

The Phillips thesis may be simply stated. The Republicans, he writes, now have an "opportunity to fashion a majority among the 57 per cent of the American electorate which voted to eject the Democratic party from national power." Of this 57 per cent, about 43.5 per cent came from Republicans, while the remaining 13.5 per cent were supporters of the American Independent Party. Thus the GOP should make a serious and strenuous bid for the 9,906,473 citizens who cast their ballots for George Corley Wallace. Courting a bloc of this magnitude is a legitimate political pursuit. (Between now and 1972 the Democrats will try to make inroads of their own into the Wallace constituency.) The only question at issue is what kind of appeal one makes to citizens who once succumbed to the charms of an Alabama governor.

As I read him, Phillips proposes that the GOP approach Wallace's supporters on their own terms: not to persuade them out of their prejudices, but rather to produce a Republican record paralleling that promised by the Wallace party. But this is not simply a replay of the "Southern strategy" advanced by Goldwater's staff in 1964 and reactivated by Strom Thurmond last year. For only half of Wallace's votes came from the South; the attraction he held for Northern voters emerges as of far greater significance.

At the same time, Phillips's comments on the South carry more than regional implications. It is in the Republicans' interest, he suggests, to encourage black voting in the former Confederate states. "Maintenance of Negro voting rights is essential to the GOP," Phillips points out, although not out of affection for the Fourteenth Amendment. For only if Southern blacks become more dominant in Democratic politics will Southern whites flee to a Republican haven. "Unless Negroes continue to displace white Democratic organizations, the latter may remain viable spokesmen for Deep Southern conservatism." Phillips has nothing against Deep Southern conservatism: he just wants it enlisted in Republican service, in state and local elections as well as at the Presidential level. (Right now Republicans hold only 13 per cent of the seats in Southern legislatures.) He has no objections whatever to the Democrats becoming an all-black party: in fact, the more Julian Bonds and Charles Evers' the better. Such a party would soon descend to minority status, winning only a few rural counties and a handful of ghetto precincts and leaving all the white refugees to the GOP.

This tactic clearly has relevance to the North, where the Wallace vote ran to 10 per cent in Kansas and Michigan, and 12 per cent in Ohio and Indiana. (Indeed, even in New York City, almost one voter in ten pulled the Wallace lever in Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens neighborhoods like Parkchester, Greenpoint, and South Ozone Park.) Most of these voters were Democrats indulging their periodic penchant for punishing their own party: the sort of thing many of them did when they voted for William Buckley or against Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher for mayor. But their grievances against liberal legislation and litigation may have grown to the point where their loyalties are, in Phillips's words, "in motion between a Democratic past and a Republican future."

The trick, then, is to steal Wallace's thunder without repelling bedrock Republican voters. And the way to achieve this is not by imitating his method but rather by co-opting his message. One of the reasons Wallace got only five million votes in the North was that he was just a bit too square. Consequently, the issues he raised, treated with just a shade more sophistication, could well be turned to Republican advantage.

RESTYING itself as a party of "populist conservatism"—Phillips's term—the GOP should, he says, appeal to the apprehensions of wage-earning homeowners and white-collared taxpayers.† And in the North as in the South this would be a white party, welcoming Americans of every region who find themselves disquieted over black behavior—whether criminal or constitutional. This posture would probably produce some losses among groups put off by so scapegoat a strategy. Yet even when aggregated, these elements add up to less than meets the eye. For example, young people. Phillips's slide-rule reveals that the average voter is aged forty-seven and those under twenty-five cast less than 8 per cent of the ballots. (Moreover, within the group we call "youth" many more work as secretaries or garage mechanics than attend elite universities.) The Ripon-Rockefeller notion that

* I might add that the book is completely without charm or humor, in fact chillingly so in many places. Moreover, Phillips emerges as a skilled technician unencumbered by literary awareness. Thus on page 83, for example, he supports a point of his own by straight-facedly quoting a passage from *The American Establishment* in which Richard Rovere outlines the theories of "Werner Von Fromm."

† Phillips calls these voters "lower-middle class," but many of them are working-class Americans earning just as much money as their white-collar counterparts. The real difference between these classes is that a worker can be relatively content on $9000 a year, while the middle class finds this a poverty wage.

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the GOP can gain black votes emerges as political science-fiction: even when the party could find a James Farmer to run under its banner, he got only 27 per cent of the vote in Bedford-Stuyvesant. In fact, the task of fashioning a Republican majority may actually be speeded up by refusing to court liberal-leaning elements in the electorate. In any populist program it is wisest to write off opinionated minorities who demand basic programmatic changes in return for their votes. A good case in point is the current governor of California, who won his million-vote margin largely by implying that he had no wish for the support of blacks, intellectuals, or the poor. ("One of the few suburbs that Reagan lost," Phillips writes with apparent approval, "was rich, theatrical, and quite Jewish Beverly Hills.")

Phillips also shows a shrewd statistical eye for the nation's growth patterns. Parts of the country still under the "Yankee sphere of influence" tend to be areas of decline: not only central cities like New York, Providence, and Philadelphia, but also out-dated factory towns such as Scranton, Fall River, and Duluth. Even if they persist in their Democratic habits, their electoral weight diminishes with every passing year. The real population explosion is occurring in the "Sun Belt Conservative Cities"—Anaheim, Tulsa, Shreveport, Orlando, Albuquerque—where patriotism and piety commingle with split-level housing and aerospace employment. The Republicans have already begun to make inroads here; but they have yet to plumb the anxieties of these sun-loving citizens. A populist posture is well-suited to this constituency, and for its platform Phillips suggests—somewhat more diplomatically than Wallace—the politics of "ethnic polarization." Implicit in Phillips's state-by-state tabulations is the message that a "large national majority" of voting Americans can be mobilized by approaching them in terms of their lowest common denominator: white fear of the black presence.*

ETHNIC POLARIZATION is already enmeshed in our politics, although mainly at the local level. If many of these racial antipathies are based on stereotypes, the anxieties infecting white Americans still have good statistical foundation. Disproportionate numbers of addicts and criminals are black, and strange black faces in one's neighborhood do in fact signal greater probability of theft or violence than unknown white visitors. (Any white person who claims that he can pass a group of black youths on a dark street as equably as a group of whites is an out-and-out liar.) The widespread approval of measures like preventive detention assumes that the detained defendants will not only be black but also presumptively dangerous; and popular opposition to putting civilians on police review boards has been spurred by the desire to give the police greater freedom in arresting black criminals. Whether or not "racist," these fears are not unreasoned. The stumbling-block, properly emphasized by civil libertarians, is that any wholehearted attempt to round up black criminals will—as does any round-up—inevitably lead to the conviction of at least some innocent black citizens. (And any white person who believes that the conviction of an innocent black is "less important" than the conviction of an innocent white, *is* a racist.) Furthermore, the air of arrogance worn by many blacks and the disdainful demonstrations of the Panthers and Afro-American societies on campuses has converted not a few erstwhile liberals to the law-and-order campaign.

None of this needs to be said, of course. But if the issue comes to the surface, it is possible to argue that tensions of this sort simply continue an old political tradition. "Ethnic polarization," Phillips writes, "is a longstanding hallmark of American politics, not an unprecedented and menacing development of 1968." Perhaps he really believes that an explicit white-black stand-off in our day will be analagous, say, to Boston's Back Bay-Irish animosities of an earlier time. Others might conclude that the race-based populism of an all-white party could bring repression less akin to Boston and more like that of the Black-and-Tans.

But any talk of populist politics remains largely theoretical until such a movement is mustered and mobilized, indeed brought into being by politicians willing to rouse such sentiments to the surface. This is what William Jennings Bryan, Joseph McCarthy, and George Wallace all tried in turn; and all failed because their personal styles were not attuned to a variety of regions and classes. Indeed, in the past, populist success has depended on an appealing personality—an ingredient Phillips hardly mentions—and charismatic men are rare commodities in Republican circles. About the only Republican I can think of who might fill this bill on a national scale would be Ronald Reagan: his smooth, suburban appearance appealed to Californians in every part of that prototypical state; and my own guess is that had his party nominated him last year he might even have won. However, Reagan will be well into his sixties by 1976, and there is no one else remotely like him on the Republican horizon.

As an alternative, the GOP may try to speed the polarizing process by administrative means. And at this point the moving spirit seems to be our very un-charismatic Attorney-General, to whom *The Emerging Republican Majority* is partially dedicated. (Richard Nixon shares this

* To be sure, white radicals can also be used as an issue, particularly privileged undergraduates who cut classes to disrupt campuses or party conventions. But such confrontations are not really a principal concern of the people Phillips wants to win over; they are certainly secondary to race.

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honor.) It may well be that a mixture of action and inaction on John Mitchell's part will have the desired effect: conveying to Wallaceites and other dissident Democrats that the Republicans can be relied upon to keep the blacks in their proper place. But I am not sure that voters of this sort can be counted on to get the message: postponement of desegregation suits, the arrest and indictment of activists, and similar Justice Department initiatives may fail to come across as a coherent program. Still and all, this is the best the party can do with the personnel it now has: populism via bureaucratic procedures rather than soul-stirring rallies or pulsating television performances.

But Phillips also has plans for reforming his party from the inside, and here he may encounter his greatest obstacle. If he finds the GOP "much too establishmentarian," this does not mean that the Republicans are an aristocratic or a patrician preserve. Indeed, John Lindsay, Ogden Reid, and the two Rockefellers just about exhaust the list of upper-class offspring willing to stand up on platforms and appeal for votes. (In fact, scions of old families who get the political urge usually choose the Democrats, who always reserve some room for pedigreed candidates.) Thus, while the well-to-do may write occasional checks for the GOP, they have left the running of the party to people rather different from themselves.

The Republican "establishment" consists largely of small-town lawyers backstopped by the merchants and businessmen based in medium-sized cities.* This is America's true bourgeoisie: self-employed, self-reliant, and not a little pleased over their own success and superiority. If not always of Yankee antecedents—Spiro Agnew cannot claim Anglo-Saxon bloodlines—most are still apt to invoke puritan precepts when confronted with conditions they do not understand. At the same time, the segment of the middle class these men symbolize has lost much of its influence and importance, and therein lies much of the Republican problem. For GOP committees continue to look like local business clubs, frightening off less prepossessing citizens whose newly-acquired conservatism ought to be attracting Republican interest. In the past the Republican rank-and-file was remarkably quiescent, deferring to the bankers and merchants who made policy and selected candidates. Phillips's proposal is that these worthies make room for the clerks and salesmen who have hitherto stood outside the GOP threshold. In addition, he faces up to the religious implications inherent in any Republican expansion program. For a broadened GOP base would necessarily involve giving power and preferment to Catholics, something this essentially Protestant party has always been slow to do.†

Therefore, much of Phillips's message is ecumenical, and he chides his party for failing to enlist Catholics in the Republican fold. His own experience in the Northern Bronx showed him that Irish and Italian voters could be turned into enthusiastic Republicans when given a candidate with whom they could identify. Many Catholics now have lower-middle-class incomes but retain remnants of their working-class past, and one way for the GOP to win them over is by giving more of its nominations to men with names like Edward Derwinski, Martin McKneally, and Paul Fino.

Curiously, Phillips hardly mentions New York's Conservative party, which has done exceptionally well with Catholic voters in recent elections. The Conservative Senatorial candidate, James Buckley, got over 17 per cent of the statewide vote in 1968; and in 16 of the state's 41 districts Conservative votes ran from 20 to 29 per cent. Indeed, what Phillips would like is a Republican-Conservative coalition in all parts of the country, welding white Protestants and Catholics together in an equitable admixture of candidates and compatible issues. Moreover, while the official ideology of the Conservative party runs parallel to the position of the *National Review*, it has confined its campaigns to closer-to-home questions such as preserving neighborhood schools, crime in the streets, and keeping the blacks at bay. What is also instructive is that the great majority of Buckley supporters voted for Nixon rather than Wallace. Still and all, all too many of these Buckley-Nixon voters still register—and continue to regard themselves—as Democrats. Only if they are weaned away from the party of their parents and grandparents can they be counted upon—as upstate New York Republicans can—to pull GOP levers as a matter of reflex.

And in this regard the Conservatives provide another clue. Irish and Italians wearing Robert Hall suits have been made to feel at home at Conservative rallies in Syracuse, Sunnyside, and Suffolk County. The Conservatives have come across as a truly lower-middle-class party, carrying none of the snobbish connotations associated with GOP county committees. Hence the big problem for the Republican party, in New York and elsewhere, is in its internal arrangements. If I may paraphrase an unlikely authority, the specter which will haunt the Grand Old Party is a class struggle between its upper-middle establishment and the lower-middle arrivals it hopes to attract. Future dinners may have to be held in American Legion halls rather than at the local Sheraton Inn, with GOP burghers forgoing their martinis in favor of beer. Phillips seems willing to have the catering done by Kentucky Fried

* See Stephen Hess and David S. Broder, *The Republican Establishment*, and my review in Commentary, December 1967.

† See Milton Viorst's *Fall from Grace: The Republican Party and the Puritan Ethic*, New American Library, 1968.

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Chicken, but I am not sure how many other Republicans have an appetite for paper cups and plastic plates.

THOUGH THE "large national majority" that Phillips hopes to attract to the GOP consists of relatively prosperous citizens—homeowners and taxpayers who now have something to lose—it would be a mistake to assume that they oppose federal spending and government subsidies. Phillips commits this error when he opines that "Wallace's vote would probably have dipped much lower had Richard Nixon chosen to rally aberrant multitudes of 1964 Goldwater backers by sounding the anti-Great Society clarion. . . ." Nonsense of this sort weakens much of Phillips's case. In the first place, Goldwater himself was never supported by "multitudes": if he got 27 million votes, at least 20 million of these came from Republican regulars like my Anglo-Saxon in-laws who come to the aid of their party no matter who is nominated. But more important, a large majority of voters do in fact favor Great Society-type programs—or at least those which assist the middle class: Medicare, aid to education, tax reform, consumer protection. They may complain about taxes, civil-rights enforcement, and welfare for people less upstanding than themselves. But they hardly favor dismantling Social Security or turning TVA over to Tennessee Edison. In fact, most of the Wallace voters Phillips wishes to attract have enjoyed federal subsidies and services for most of their lives. Wallace himself sensed this and hence emphasized the racial issue throughout his campaign.

What this means is that if the GOP is to win over lower-middle-class clerks in Queens, steelworkers in Youngstown, and retired police lieutenants in San Diego, it will have to embrace the tradition of Tory Democracy. That is, it will have to deliver at least those public programs which provide amenities for Americans in the $7000-$15,000 income range. Such services can be supplied even while other measures freeze welfare payments and public housing, repress racial and radical protest, and adjust the Constitution to facilitate criminal convictions. We know from recent experience that punishing unpopular minorities can win local elections; nevertheless, in the long run the lower-middle class will want its share of subventions, whether in the form of parochial school aid for their children, nursing-home subsidies for their grandparents, or new commuter trains for themselves. Outlays such as these—which the Democrats are always willing to promise—can be expensive. At the moment, it remains to be seen how many Republican regulars would accept expenditures of this magnitude.

WHILE HARDLY a Benjamin Disraeli, Richard Nixon probably sensed the scope of his party's problem even before Kevin Phillips put pen to paper. For if John Mitchell sits at his right hand, he has made a secure place for Robert Finch on his left. While the one adviser's indifference to civil rights and civil liberties can raise Republican popularity in many precincts, the other's sympathy for public spending and activist assistants fills a less flamboyant but nonetheless necessary role. If Nixon gives simultaneous attention to these twin approaches, I predict his easy reelection. And if GOP candidates at lesser levels can stir themselves to support such a double-edged strategy, the party may well begin to chalk up majorities as it has not since the days of Calvin Coolidge.

Merging the Wallace constituency with the Republican rank-and-file, though not an appealing prospect, stands out as a real possibility. By coalescing the class Alexis de Tocqueville once called the "eager and apprehensive men of small property" and making use of anxieties that more gentlemanly generations thought best to ignore, the line between majority rule and majority tyranny could easily be crossed. The losers would be those Americans the Republicans will have written off. And their reaction to repression and repudiation—which is not my topic at this time—would have an impact of its own on the character and quality of this country's political life.

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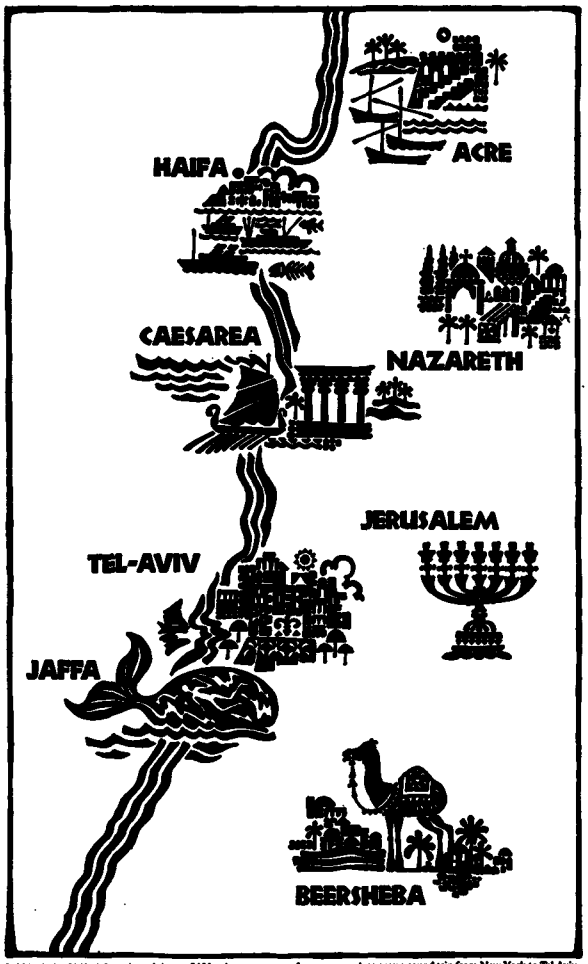

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The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Arthur A. Cohen

How can it be that Christianity, regarding itself the successor and completion of Judaism, should have elected to take into itself the body and substance of that Jewish teaching which it believed to be defective, which it regarded itself as having in measure rejected, in measure transformed, in measure repaired and fulfilled? How can it be that Judaism, the precedent in principle and progenitor in history of Christianity, should have remained not only independent of but unassimilated by the doctrinal vision and historical pressure of Christianity?

This is a conundrum, but it is not without solution. Orders of existence can remain contiguous without coalescing, parallel without overlapping. But to speak in this way of Judaism and Christianity is not quite accurate, for terms like contiguity and coalescence properly describe the disposition of objects in space, whereas the essential character of the Jewish and Christian connection is that of a relation in time, and not in time alone but in filled time, time in which events are numbered. History is the medium in which Judaism and Christianity are sustained. There is, therefore, in addition to space *and* time, the nexus of events, priority and succession, formation and influence, human passion and persuasion.

Jewish and Christian time is impassioned time, time in which destinies are elaborated and consummated. Such time is the time of salvation. Jews and Christians in the first century, Jewish Jews and Jewish Christians, Jewish Jews and Gentile Christians, related less to one another as persons than to one another as bearers of the Word, as legatees and transmitters of saving truth. They could not but regard their simple flesh and their uncomplicated spirits as vessels of the Holy Spirit, the instrumentalities through whom God worked out extraordinary designs and expectations. Theirs was a personalism, but it bore less resemblance to the existential personalism with which we are today familiar than it did to the historical realism of the Bible, in which persons were immanent expressions of the divine-human tension. Biblical anthropology discloses more about God than it does about man. Biblical man, confronting himself, addressed God. He worked by a devious deduction, believing himself to be an extrusion and exemplification of the divine intention, and hence valuing his own action both inordinately and inadequately, for in his behavior he was both the bearer of the ultimate intention of creation and a hopelessly frail, limited, inconsequential thing: thus, the numerous psalms in which man is ranked little lower than the angels and in the same breath derided and derogated. Man was person and paradox—person because God had made each man unique and irreplaceable, and paradox because every man was in himself the crossroads and meeting ground of the failure and distortion of creation.

I say all this to suggest that the Jewish and Christian relation was in ancient times much too serious an engagement to become, as it has become in our time, an assumed tradition. The ancient world expected a redeemer. The Jews expected a redeemer to come out of Zion; Christianity affirmed that a redeemer had come out of Zion, but that he had come not for Israel alone but for all mankind. Judaism denied that claim, rejected the person of that redeemer, called his claim presumption and super-arrogation, denied his mission to them. (Indeed, as the Synoptic Gospels make abundantly clear, Jesus of Nazareth regarded his mission as being first and foremost, if not exclusively, to the Children of Israel, though as theologians have come to teach us, Jesus did not understand either his own or God's will as well as St. Paul understood both.) That same redeemer, unheard by most of Israel, rejected by its Jerusalemite establishment, was tried as an insurrectionist and brutally slain.

It matters therefore not at all in my view that much of Jewish and Christian doctrine is confluent, for in what does that confluence consist? That Jews and Christians affirm an unconditional, universal, and unique God, single and undifferentiated; that that God is believed to have created man, set him in the midst of an ordered nature, appointed him to a destiny of service and trust, brought near a single people—selected arbitrar-

Arthur A. Cohen is the author of *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew* and *The Carpenter Years*, a novel. The present essay will appear, in somewhat different form, in Mr. Cohen's forthcoming book, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, to be published by Harper & Row.

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ily, but nevertheless unambiguously—to be His own and to bring His teaching to all the earth. These affirmations respecting the creation, the covenant of God with His elected people-servant, the revelation of His teaching, and the promise of redemption—these truths, schematic, loose, general, archetypal, connect the vision of Judaism and Christianity. But this connection is a philosophic formulation of what in the order of faith pulsates with irrationality, passion, intensity, sharp disagreement, fissure, and the abyss of historical enmity. I suggest in part therefore that the Judeo-Christian tradition is a construct, an artificial gloss of reason over the swarm of fideist passion. But this too is not enough. What is omitted is the sinew and bone of actuality, for where Jews and Christians divide, divide irreparably, is that for Jews the Messiah is yet to come and for Christians he has already come. That is irreparable.

It is true that Jews have made concession to the faith of Christians, acknowledging alternately—with charity or animus—that Christians and Moslems are closer to the purity of the Godhead than are pagans and idol-worshipers, but this is only to reaffirm that ultimately Israel, employing the artifacts of Christianity and Islam, will bring all of mankind to the divine teaching of Sinai. It is equally true that intertestamental theology and the early Church Fathers recognized the force of Israel's refusal of Jesus as the Christ by developing the doctrine of the Second Coming, recognizing as they did that the end of days had not come to pass as promised, that the transformation of time and history anticipated in the immediate aftermath of the Crucifixion had transpired only in the eyes of faith, and that for the public, unconverted eye there could only be the promise and persuasion of the time yet to come when Jesus would return in glory, to consummate Israel, and to reintegrate Israel and the Church.

BUT IN THE meantime, between the times, between the promise of the Synagogue and the promise of the Church, what of *those* times? For those times (two thousand years of them have nearly passed), what ensued was mainly the pavanne of death, where faith throttled faith, believer tormented believer, and the impotence of man before the magnitude of his believing overwhelmed mercy and love. We can learn much from the history of Jewish-Christian relations, but the one thing we cannot make of it is a discourse of community, fellowship, and understanding. How then do we make of it a tradition?

It is curious to observe that in historical periods in which it may well have been proper to speak of tradition, men did not speak of tradition. They recognized an order of receipt and transmission, a body of sacred and secular learning which defined the substance of divine revelation and humane instruction, but they did not regard the tradition as something outside of them, as an external datum, ordered, preserved, objectified. Tradition was interior and hence did not require sanctification and obeisance; it was active, *traditio*, the carrying over and forward of something which was supported and sustained. Only when *traditio* was used in the sense of *receptus* or *redactio*, as something defined, ordered, or enacted, was it understood in the sense in which we now use the term. The datum received or redacted, the Word of God, finished, closed, sealed into Scripture and hence terminated as a document, describes not the end of tradition, but the beginning of tradition. Before the redaction of the Hebrew Bible, there was a biblical tradition which kept alive the hot coal of God's word, passing it carefully, circumspectly, but intently and with seriousness from generation to generation, reviving and reawakening it, quickening and intensifying its power. And when that tradition ran the risk of splintering, it was set down, redacted, and sealed, and the tradition ended—only to begin again as rabbinic tradition, which in turn was accumulated, transmitted, developed, argued, lived, until it too became so vast, so sprawling, so subtle that it demanded redaction. The requirement of man to remember his achievements, to behold his works so that they might congratulate him is the impulse to redact the living, spoken, transmission of the word into its written, dogmatic, authoritative form.

TRADITION is *living* when there is genuine tradition, the spoken word and the heard word surpassing the written word. It is the need to supply the spoken word with an adulterate preservative that compels us to conserve by writing. The most pristine traditions are bardic, epic, poetic, and never written. This is really only to say, as the Rabbis recognized, that in the Prophets and Writings God spoke, no longer directly but through the medium of His saints and prophets, and in the post-biblical literature God no longer spoke, but what was heard was an echo of his speech. This insight reverberates in the tale told by a Hasidic master who described the generational difference between himself and his teachers by explaining that when the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, had a difficult task to perform, he would go to a certain place in the forest, light a fire, and meditate in prayer; his successor knew the place in the forest and although he no longer lit the fire, he still remembered the Baal Shem's prayer; and his successor no longer knew the prayer but knew the place in the woods; and he, in his generation, all that he could do was to tell the story. In our time many of us no longer even have the enthusiasm to tell the story, believing perhaps that the story itself has become meaningless.

It is, indeed, this sense of intrinsic meaningless-

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ness which is quite possibly a significant aspect of what has come to be regarded as the Judeo-Christian tradition. Despite the intensity and seriousness with which Jews and Christians engaged in murderous polemics from the first century until the late 19th century (and even today the thesis has been argued by the French historian, Jules Isaac, that Nazi anti-Semitism was a secular radicalization of the anti-Jewish impulses of historic Christianity), the debate was always qualified by the commonly held conviction that the manner in which a man composed his relationship to God was central and primary to his existence; that this relationship was constitutive, and therefore ontological, in character; and finally that it was a relationship which could only be regarded with absolute, albeit often dreary, seriousness. It was also believed that society and culture, being expressions of the relationship between man and God, could only endure and express their fidelity to God if they were religiously homogeneous, unmarked by dissent, disagreement, divisiveness; hence it followed that any community within the larger society which denied the prevailing and enforced homogeneity of doctrine, upon which the society's very life was believed to depend, should be either forcibly converted, driven out, or slain. But in addition to all this, there existed between Jews and Christians an order of ignorance which, even with the modest exceptions of German and Italian humanists, remained complete and impenetrable until the age of the Enlightenment. Jews regarded Christians as at best second-best, and at worst as execrable idolaters; Christians regarded Jews as at best worthy of conversion and at worst as deicides and anti-Christs.

THEOLOGICAL fratricide, however, cannot simply be deplored, although it is presently the easiest thing in the world of religion *to* deplore. The endless parade of Jewish thinkers addressing Christian audiences and rehearsing with calm and fluency the corruption of Christendom, alongside the equally sincere and passionate late-flowering recognition by Christian thinkers of the enormities which Christianity has inflicted upon the Jews, makes for a kind of rhapsodic, communal suffering which is finally purgative, but not really illuminating. At the same time that I would recommend that we be done with the enumeration of massacres and the exhibition of Jewish scars, I would also suggest that we can learn something by reflecting on the order of seriousness, unanimity, and ignorance upon which this historical fratricide depended. And one thing we can learn is how the idea of the "Judeo-Christian tradition" began and why it has become in our day a myth which buries under the fine silt of rhetoric the authentic, meaningful, and irrevocable distinction which exists between Jewish belief and Christian belief.

I HAVE indicated that the notion of a Judeo-Christian tradition did not come into existence during that period which enclosed the seventeen-hundred years of the origin, expansion, consolidation, and withering of Christian power. As long as Christianity could keep the enemy without the gate it was able to maintain a species of homogeneity and community which was for all intents and purposes unassailable. In that period Christianity engaged Judaism in debate, less as a testimony to the openness of communication than as a theatrical exhibition of its power. There was no discourse, for none was felt to be needed. The argument had long since been decided by God and confirmed by the witness of the Church Triumphant.

The break in this pattern of no-communication and anti-dialogue and the transition from a closed and homogeneous society to an open and fragmented society may be traced to the extraordinary revulsion through which European society passed during the century-long wars of religion. The wars killed in the millions, but killed, it was recognized, not for the sake of the Kingdom of God, but in order that principalities and potentates might retain inherited power and continue to exercise it. It was an insane time—a time, not a little like our own, in which millenarianism, the sense of doom and apocalypse, and eschatological expectation flourished. But out of that massive occlusion of wasted life, out of mountains of corpses, there came a revulsion on behalf of man which survives to our time. If the community of the religious, as an analogue of society, could yield such desperate and hopeless folly, then religion was the enemy of man, and the notion of God and his faithful was an enormous delusion and reservoir of unreason. The effort of the *philosophes* was both to debunk the irrationality of religion and to construct a civil society grounded upon the neutralization of religion in the public domain.

The critique of religion undertaken by the Enlightenment was profoundly anti-mythological. Aware of the luxury and opulence of ancient myth, and delighting in the aesthetic vitality and energy of its vision, the philosophers of the Enlightenment nonetheless had no doubt that ancient myth was against reason, and against common sense. But most particularly the Enlightenment was persuaded that the myths of religion produced fanatical narrowness, political repression, and social discord. In the view of the Enlightenment, sectarian religion was the enemy and Christianity was the primary example of sectarianism. It could not be helped that in the attack on Christianity Judaism should suffer, for Christianity depended upon Judaism for the internal logic of its history. Early Christianity had sought to polarize itself to Judaism; the Fathers of the Eastern Church (and to a lesser extent the Latin Fathers) set the ministry of Jesus Christ in opposition to

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the teaching of the Hebrew Bible, expunging the Gospels of their Jewish roots, cutting off the Church from its involvement in the fortunes of the Synagogue, turning Christianity away from the Jews and toward the pagan world. The *philosophes* now recalled Christianity to its dependence upon the Hebrew Bible. The obscurantism of Christianity—however much it may have been enhanced and reticulated by the original doctrine of the myth of Jesus Christ—depended upon the Hebrew tradition. It could not be otherwise, then, but that a "Christo-Jewish tradition" should come to be defined and characterized as one of irrationality and fanaticism.

But if the Judeo-Christian tradition is initially a construct of the Enlightenment, it was not at that time a myth, for what the Enlightenment set out to destroy was, in fact, accurately perceived. Religious fanaticism—growing upon the soil of exclusivities, narrow sectarianism, doctrines of the elect and the damned—contributed to repression, nationalism, and war. In the assaults leveled by that Jewish precursor of the Enlightenment, Spinoza, in his *Tractatus*, and later by Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, the Hebrew biblical writ was perceived as a unit which, despite eccentric theological divisions and disagreements, produced in Christianity a religion to be opposed. The Christian religion depended for its essential theological groundwork upon the religious vision of the Jews and, for that reason, the Christo-Jewish legacy was both affirmed and opposed.

The 19th-century revolution in biblical studies begun by the German school of scientific higher criticism inaugurated the second phase of the history of the myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In response, it would seem, to the position of the Enlightenment, it became the concern of Protestant biblical scholars to disentagle Christianity from its Jewish roots, to split off the Christian experience from that of Judaism and at the same time to naturalize the humanity of Jesus. It became commonplace in this movement of thought to demonstrate that what appeared to the light of Reformation theology to be most generous, and humane, and charitable in classic Judaism was really a contribution from outside, whereas indigenous biblical Judaism was violent, self-righteous, obsessionally paranoid. The Hebrew biblical tradition was acknowledged, but its nobility and excellence had been taken over by the Church, and what was left over to post-biblical, rabbinic Judaism (the Judaism of the Jews) was legalistic, ethnocentric, spiritually defective. From this movement of 19th-century thought emerged a species of hypostasis which envisaged the benighted Jew of the Old Testament, struggling along with a half-truth, in bondage to a hopeless legalism. On the one hand the genius of the Hebrew Bible was commended; on the other hand Christianity was set in superior condescension to the traditions of Judaism which survived, like ruins, the advent of Jesus Christ. The Judeo-Christian tradition was acknowledged, this time, by Christianity, but by a Christianity anxious to demonstrate that what had been correctly denigrated by the Enlightenment was, in fact, the teaching of the ancient Jews whose additions to and alterations of the pure Hebrew vision corrupted the source of Christianity.

The higher criticism of the Hebrew Bible became, as Solomon Schechter called it, "the higher anti-Semitism," designed to meet the critique of the *philosophes* and of German idealist philosophy by demeaning the Judaic element in Christianity. Whatever truth there is in the scientific criticism of the Hebrew Bible—and there is considerable truth—the ideological impulse was corrupt. The Judaism which survives the onslaught of Protestant higher criticism is buried under a mountain of historicist formulations, while a pure, virtuous Kantian Christianity—freed from Jewish accretion—is defined.

THE SOCIAL consequence of the de-Judaizing of Christian theology could not be more evident than in the pitiful inability of the Protestant (and to a slightly—but only slightly—lesser extent, Catholic) churches to oppose German National Socialism. It is precarious to make considerations of ethics irrelevant to concerns of theology, to split off the task of living in the world from the pursuit of grace, to make, as many 20th-century Protestant theologians have made, questions of ethics irrelevant to faith. Among the leaders of the confessional churches, only Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany and Karl Barth at its borders inveighed against the capitulation of Church to State. The theologians of the 19th century had, indeed, succeeded: the ethics of the Hebrew Bible were winnowed by the Gospels and the ethics restored to Christian conscience were ethics for the "betweentime," when history awaited the return of Christ. The purge of Christianity of its Jewish elements was disastrous. If that was Judeo-Christian tradition—in the spirit of Wellhausen, Kittel (and even most recently Bultmann's *Primitive Christianity*) —the world could not abide it again.

The renewal of the doctrine of the Judeo-Christian tradition, this time liberated from the *ressentiment* of Protestant defensiveness and Catholic *hauteur*, is a postwar phenomenon. Christianity has had a bad conscience and Jews seem justifiably content to pique it. Unfortunately, the penance which some Christians seem willing to perform and which some Jews seem anxious to exact, whatever its personal value, does not legitimate the creation of a "Judeo-Christian tradition." Clearly it is not denied that both religions share compatible truths. There is a common sacred history; the ethical values to which appeal is made are similar; the eschatological vision over-

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laps; the normative institutions of both faiths are analagous. Christianity is, as Christians describe it, the younger brother to Judaism and, as Judaism describes it, the daughter religion. The felt need, however, to spin from such compatibilities a "tradition," suggests the presence of something else.

It is an apparent truism that the concept of the Judeo-Christian tradition has particular currency and significance in the United States. It is not a commonplace in Europe as it is here; rather, Europeans since the war have become habituated to speak of Jewish-Christian amity, to define the foundations and frontiers of community, to describe and, in describing, to put to rest, historic canards and libels. In Europe they are not addicted as we are here to proclaiming a tradition in which distinctions are fudged, diversities reconciled, differences overwhelmed by sloppy and sentimental approaches to falling in love after centuries of misunderstanding and estrangement. I need not speak at length here of the religion of American secularism, that uncritical Jacobinism which is neither fish nor fowl, and certainly neither Christian nor Jewish. Suffice it to say that such secular religiosity is correctly perceived by both communities to be dangerous; it is the common quicksand of Jews and Christians. And it is here that we can identify the myth. Jews and Christians have conspired together to promote a tradition of common experience and common belief, whereas in fact they have joined together to reinforce themselves in the face of a common disaster. Inundated institutions have made common cause before a world that regards them as hopelessly irrelevant, and meaningless. The myth, then, is a projection of the will to endure of both Jews and Christians, an identification of common enemies, an abandonment of millennial antagonisms in the face of threats which do not discriminate between Judaism and Christianity; and these threats, the whole of the Triple Revolution—automation, the population explosion, nuclear warfare—these are the threats which evoke the formation of the myth.

The threats are real and desperate, but patching-over will not, in the long run, help. Patching-over can only deteriorate further what it seeks to protect. The Judeo-Christian tradition is an eschatological myth for the Christian who no longer can deal with actual history and a historical myth for Jews who can no longer deal with the radical negations of eschatology. The Christian must learn to depend upon the Jew who says salvation has not yet come, to interpret for him what happens when power collapses, how men shall behave when the relative and conditional institutions of society crumble, for the Jew is an expert in unfulfilled time, whereas the Christian is an adept believer for redeemed times *only*. The Christian may come to depend upon the Jew for an explanation of unredeemedness. The Jew, on the other hand, must look to Christianity to ransom for him his faith in the Messiah, to renew for him his expectation of the nameless Christ. This is the center of a true Jewish-Christian nexus, what might be called a Jewish-Christian humanism; but the possible lineaments of that humanism are scarcely to be glimpsed in our times.

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On Eric Hoffer

Penn Kemble

To judge by a recent flurry of articles in important magazines, and the echoes of Marxist-Leninist slogans coming out of the New Left, the working-class white American may be in for a good deal of attention in the next few years. And although one may have misgivings about some of the things that are being said, the attention itself is long overdue. Ever since the mid-1950's, American intellectuals have been virtually uniform in their aloofness from—if not down-right hostility to—that sector of the population which lies between the dramatically poor and the neurotically affluent. Part of the price of this hauteur has been paid in the national and municipal elections of the past year.

Perhaps this new concern for the "common man" or the "man-in-the-middle" as he is called—there is a lingering squeamishness about the use of the Marxian terms "worker" and "working class"—will make possible a new appraisal of the writings of Eric Hoffer.*

During the past few years Hoffer has emerged as a singular exception to the cultural blackout of the lower-income white. Although he is often rather glibly classified as a cold-war liberal, a backlasher, or a plain crank, his work deserves to be read seriously, even if only as a case study.† For all his undeniable uniqueness, he is a rich example of some typical working-class attitudes—especially those which have been so perplexing to the American Left.

Calvin Tompkins, whose perceptive profile of Hoffer originally appeared in the *New Yorker*, quotes him as saying, "My train of thought grew out of my life just the way a leaf or a branch grows out of a tree." No doubt this is true of most writers. But because Hoffer had little contact with professional intellectuals (except for radicals in the labor movement) until he was in his fifties and had published his first book, his personal experience must have been an unusually strong influence on his work.

Hoffer was born in New York of German immigrant parents and spent his childhood in relative poverty. He was afflicted by blindness when he was five, and when he recovered his sight at fifteen he became an avid and wide-ranging reader. The habit never left him—he discovered Montaigne, who had a great influence on him, simply by picking the fattest book off a shelf in a second-hand book store to take with him on a winter mining trip. Both of Hoffer's parents were dead by the time he was eighteen. "When my father died," he says, "I realized that I would have to fend for myself. I knew several things; one, that I didn't want to work in a factory; two, that I couldn't stand being dependent on the good graces of a boss; three, that I was going to stay poor; four, that I had to get out of New York. Logic told me that California was the poor man's country."

In the 1920's, California was still open country. Going west, Hoffer joined a great popular migration, made up for the most part of people of his own social class. These were the people who became the miners, longshoremen, railroad workers, sailors, and field-hands of the exploding, rough-and-ready capitalism of the Pacific coast. Their own adventurous natures combined with the relative freedom of western society to create in these workers a rambunctious individualism. The American West was one of the few places in the world where capitalist society really did rely to a great extent on "free labor." There were, at least for a time, enough jobs to go around, so that if a worker got fed up at one he could pack up and find another. In contrast to the middle-class individualist who strained after business success, the working-class individualist sought mainly to preserve his mobility and independence (and bargaining power) against the onset of stable, large-scale economic organization, and the tightly structured society that came with it. These western workers, rather because of than in spite of their individualism, contributed a great deal to the rise of a native working-class radicalism in America. Those who had sought escape from the confines of Europe or the industrial East fought back bitterly when capitalism caught up with them in its inexorable westward march. Out of the disillusionment of these last seekers of the promised land come some of the epic names of American labor and radical history: Coeur D'Alene,

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Penn Kemble *is national secretary of the Socialist Party, USA. His article, "The Democrats After 1968," appeared in our January number.*

* Hoffer's books are available in paperback in the Perennial Library series published by Harper & Row. They include: *The True Believer* (1966), 160 pp. $.60; *The Ordeal of Change* (1967), 120 pp., $.60; *The Passionate State of Mind* (1968), 143 pp., $.75; and *The Temper of Our Time* (1969), 138 pp., $.75. His latest book, also published by Harper & Row, is *Working and Thinking on the Waterfront*, 180 pp., $4.95. See also *Eric Hoffer: An American Odyssey*, by Calvin Tompkins, photographs by George Knight, aphorisms by Eric Hoffer. Dutton, 115 pp., $4.95.

† Hoffer's books have little of the impetuosity and vehemence that frequently color his television appearances and other public pronouncements. In a widely publicized statement before the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, he blurted that the problem of campus disorders might be solved if Grayson Kirk and other college presidents had only gotten guns and shot down a few disrupters. Rhetorical overstatement that this was, it was nevertheless extreme, even for Hoffer. A number of liberal writers seized on the remark as long-awaited evidence that Hoffer is a dangerous reactionary. A good many of these same people have spent the last few years explaining irresponsible speeches and acts of black separatists in terms of the Negro's condition, and the wild behavior of the New Left in terms of the Vietnam war. Hoffer deserves at least as much sympathetic understanding as the black and student extremists who, after all, have often acted out their foolishness.

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Ludlow, Bill Haywood, the Western Federation of Miners, the IWW.

When Hoffer reached California in the early 20's the great working-class rebellion that had produced the Wobblies was very much in decline. Yet heavy traces of the Wobbly spirit must still have lingered in the air. Hoffer's experiences brought him into close association with many workers who, whether or not they shared the political program of the IWW, must have shared some of the basic social attitudes that marked its membership. He drifted from job to job, often living on skid row or in the hobo jungles. He has not written much about his personal experiences in this period—a regrettable compunction—but when he does, it is usually to illustrate a favorite theme: the great resourcefulness and natural decency of the people with whom he worked and traveled. For example:

> Once, during the Great Depression, a construction company that had to build a road in the San Bernardino Mountains sent down two trucks to the Los Angeles skid row, and anyone who could climb onto the trucks was hired. When the trucks were full the drivers put in the tailgates and drove off. They dumped us on the side of a hill in the San Bernardino Mountains, where we found bundles of supplies and equipment. The company had only one man on the spot. We began to sort ourselves out; there were so many carpenters, electricians, mechanics, cooks, men who could handle bulldozers and jackhammers, and even foremen. We put up the tents and the cook shack, fixed latrines and a shower bath, cooked supper and the next morning went out to build the road. If we had to write a constitution we probably would have had someone who knew all the whereases and wherefores. We were a shovelful of slime scooped off the pavement of skid row, yet we could have built America on the side of a hill in the San Bernardino Mountains.

It seems a long way from Eric Hoffer to the IWW; any comparison must sound sacrilegious to those campus radicals who are trying to establish their own paternity in the Wobblies' struggles for free speech and the eight-hour day. And indeed, the differences between the Wobblies and Hoffer are unmistakable: they were revolutionaries, he certainly is not. Yet there are intriguing likenesses as well. Hoffer's vision of building America in the San Bernardino Mountains has much in common with the syndicalism of Big Bill Haywood, the IWW leader, who called for the reorganization of society into "One Big Union." Both evoke a world without bosses, professors, hippies, or welfare cases, a world in which honest workers build and produce.

IN THIS syndicalist vision workers not only manage basic production, they create a total civilization. "Every longshoreman thinks he could write a book if he tried—and it is true, he probably could," Hoffer told Calvin Tomkins. "Every intellectual thinks that talent, that genius is a rare exception. Talent and genius have been wasted on an enormous scale throughout our history; this is all I know for sure."

Hoffer's disdain for intellectuals, another of his pet themes, echoes a familiar prejudice. Yet he is in no sense an anti-intellectual of the Know-Nothing, Ku-Kluxer variety, for his own work shows scholarship and a great enthusiasm for ideas. He does not mind intellectuality; he resents professional intellectuals. His reasons, put very simply, are that intellectuals don't work, and that they have a great urge to dominate those who do. The two objections are actually related, since in Hoffer's view it is the intellectual's lack of a "sense of social usefulness" which goads him into grandiose dreams of power.

A belief in the moral and social healthfulness of work is probably the major premise of Hoffer's outlook. It colors not only his attitude toward intellectuals, but his views on the race issue and the problems of the Third World. In the case of the intellectuals he abandons any pretense of Montaigne's detachment, and strikes out with polemical ardor:

> One of the greatest surprises of the 20th century was sprung by the educated when they came to power. Gandhi once said that what worried him most was "the hardness of heart of the educated," and it staggers the mind that education rather than educating the heart often makes it more savage. . . . We have yet to assimilate the fact that it took a nation of philosophers to produce Hitler and Nazism, and that in Stalin's Russia professors, writers, artists, and scientists were a pampered and petted aristocracy.

No honest democrat can deny that this statement hits on an important fact of 20th-century political life. It certainly should give a moment's pause to those who see the growing size and influence of our intelligentsia as a prelude to an inevitable movement toward greater democracy and social justice. Whatever its progressive accomplishments, the new intelligentsia has also shown a second, unmistakably ominous face. Alongside the democratic and nonviolent idealism (which has by no means fully vanished), there have now appeared a familiar elitism, an exaltation of militant totalitarianism, and a juvenile but no less dangerous mystique of violence.

YET IT IS not hard to believe that, had other things been different, the restlessness of the intellectual might have led—it might still lead—to far different results in the politics of America and the world. Intellectuals have given themselves both to despotism and to democracy, depending on the character of the larger social forces around them. They helped create the American Republic, and figured largely in the overthrow of European absolutism during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was the intellectuals of the Petofi circle who gave leadership to the Hungarian people in the first major popular uprising against modern totalitarianism. And this year we have seen a constant stream of reports of protests by Czech and Russian intellectuals against the growing chill of Soviet despotism. Hoffer's history is unbalanced; it would be fairer to say that in the intellectuals, to borrow the words of the anti-Stalinist writer Victor Serge, "the best and worst live side by side, and sometimes mingle—and

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that which is worst comes through the corruption of what is best."

But it should come as no surprise that someone like Hoffer feels as he does about intellectuals. Like most American workers, he probably has rarely sensed that the intellectual community has been on his side. Those intellectuals whom he has encountered in the labor movement have for the most part only confirmed this impression. He describes some, of benign intention, whose obsession with the social millennium has led them to scoff at the practical, day-to-day needs of workers—those banalities which often mean the difference between human degradation and a semblance of dignity to a working-class family. And there have been those who have simply used the labor movement to advance a totalitarian design—the Communists, whom Hoffer knows well from his years on the San Francisco waterfront.

HOFFER's views on the race problem are similarly rooted in his ethics of work:

> The simple fact is that the people I have lived and worked with all my life, and who make up about 60 per cent of the population outside the South, have not the least feeling of guilt toward the Negro. The majority of us started to work for a living in our teens, and we have been poor all our lives. Most of us had only a rudimentary education. Our white skin brought us no privileges and no favors. For more than twenty years I worked in the fields of California with Negroes, and now and then for Negro contractors. On the San Francisco waterfront, where I spent the next twenty years, there are as many black longshoremen as white. My kind of people does not feel that the world owes us anything, or that we owe anybody—white, black, or yellow—a damn thing. We believe that the Negro should have every right we have: the right to vote, the right to join any union open to us, the right to live, work, study, and play anywhere he pleases. But he can have no special claims on us, and no valid grievances against us. He has certainly not done our work for us.

When the essay from which the preceding statement is taken first appeared in the New York *Times Magazine*, supporters of the civil-rights movement were generally offended. That was in 1964, when integration was still fashionable. It is a fascinating irony that while Hoffer's tone and analysis would still in some circles be considered "racist," his program for solving the race problem would today be endorsed by many black militants and their white supporters. Hoffer believes simply that the Negro must solve his own problems: "Anything done to and for the Negro must be done by Negroes." Rhetorical packaging aside, this is the same rationale as that behind CORE's Black Capitalism and Stokely Carmichael's Black Power.

Of course, what all the bootstrap strategists, Hoffer included, overlook is that the American economy has eliminated the opportunities which once made it possible for so many unskilled, "culturally disadvantaged" whites to achieve a half-decent way of life. When an unskilled Southern black follows Hoffer's footsteps to the West Coast today, he finds the fields and the building sites tended by tractors and bulldozers, the canneries humming with fabulous new machinery. Few summonses await him in the help-wanted listings.

Hoffer is partly aware of this. He acknowledges that "the European immigrants not only had an almost virgin continent at their disposal and unlimited opportunities for individual advancement, but were automatically processed on their arrival into new men." But he neglects to follow through the implications this momentous difference has for his do-it-yourself solution to the stagnation and fury of the black ghetto.

One suspects that there is more at work here than simple oversight. For all his testiness, Hoffer is a subtle and logical thinker, and the problems of Negro unemployment are more or less common knowledge. Possibly he senses, if only subconsciously, that once it is acknowledged that the Negro has few opportunities available to him, Hoffer and "his kind" will be asked to pay the price of creating new ones. Given the drift of liberal opinion over the last few years, this is by no means an imaginary threat to a working man. Comfortable liberals have shown astonishing generosity in heaping social responsibilities on the shoulders of low-income whites. If there are too few jobs for blacks, the answer has often been to try to squeeze out a few white workers. If ghetto schools are bad, teachers are asked to sacrifice their own hard-won gains. If welfare funds are short, the taxes of working people show the first and proportionately greatest rise. And, to make it worse, if those who carry the burden of this "progress" show any ill feeling, they are promptly branded as reactionaries.

THE ETHIC of work can become a rationale which working people will use to justify complacency and conservatism. Thus, they may vote against anti-poverty measures by telling themselves, "Let them work for a living like I do." They can dismiss intellectuals, as Hoffer does, as a bunch of labor-fakers: "To me, they haven't raised a blade of grass, they haven't laid a brick, they don't know a goddamned thing, and here they sit in judgment." Yet these opinions spring from a simple insight which is in a sense very radical: society *is* to a very great extent built on the labor of working people. It is out of the sweat of their brows or the tedium of their days that Americans draw welfare benefits, go to college, finance the Ford Foundation, and shop on Fifth Avenue. The worker sometimes senses that he is paying for most of this, and he may resent it. If he occasionally turns on those most vulnerable and near-at-hand—the welfare client, or the black—he is also capable of turning against the most powerful: his corporate bosses. It is no coincidence that the backlash voting of the past year was preceded by a period of bitter industrial strife. The number of man-hours lost in strikes in 1967-68 was higher than that of any comparable period since the end of World War II. It was only after this struggle to keep pace with rising profits and prices failed—without ever arousing a flicker of sympathy from the liberal intellectuals—that a significant number of workers turned away from their unions to seek

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relief by voting against the taxes and social programs of the Great Society.

It should be noted that Hoffer is a good union member. He never ran for office in the International Longshore Workers' Union, but his diary indicates that he participated actively as a rank-and-filer. He does not see the unions as agencies of social reconstruction; he is a classic "pure-and-simple" trade unionist. But on the other hand he knows from his own experience that unions cannot be brushed aside in the Galbraithian manner as unimportant vestiges of the first industrial revolution:

> To the eternal workingman management is substantially the same whether it is made up of profit seekers, idealists, technicians, or bureaucrats. The allegiance of the manager is to the tasks and the results. However noble his motives, he cannot help viewing the workers as a means to an end. He will always try to get the most out of them; and it matters not whether he does it for the sake of profit, for a holy cause, or for the sheer principle of efficiency. . . . Our sole protection lies in keeping the division between management and labor obvious and matter-of-fact. We want management to manage the best it can, and the workers to protect their interests the best they can. No social order will seem to us free if it makes it difficult for the worker to maintain a considerable degree of independence from management. The things which bolster this independence are not utopian. Effective labor unions, free movement over a relatively large area, a savings account, a tradition of individual self-respect—these are some of them.

In his acceptance of a strong role for private management Hoffer is not necessarily expressing enthusiasm for free enterprise. He is, at least in part, reacting to the state-controlled economies of the totalitarian countries. "The elimination of the conventional employer gives rise to a general monstrosity that bosses not only our working hours but invades our homes and dictates our thoughts and dreams." As so often happens, Hoffer here confuses the regimentation imposed by a totalitarian party with the democratic economic planning and the libertarian political order which is the authentic socialist vision. He does remark on "the promising communal settlements in the small state of Israel and the successful programs of socialization in the small Scandinavian states." But he attributes these advances to the smallness of the countries and the heterogeneity of their populations, not recognizing that these are forms of democratic control over economic life which differ radically from the Communists' bleak experiments in bureaucratic monopoly. (One might even argue that the smallness of these countries has made successful socialization more, not less, difficult.)

DEMOCRATIC individualism, a reluctance to sacrifice in the present for the promise of a new world, deep hostility to totalitarianism, suspiciousness and resentment toward intellectuals, and the ethic of work—these qualities of the American working class have all been factors in the conservatism which has dominated American politics for much of this century, and which is now making an alarming recovery. Put another way, these are factors which have helped frustrate the rise of a broadly based radical Left in the United States.

The recognition of these characteristics has usually led radical intellectuals to the opinion that something is peculiarly "wrong" with the American working class. It is not often suggested that something may be basically wrong with American radicalism. Yet after a near century of radical failure—heroic though that failure may sometimes have been—this proposition deserves frank consideration. Central to any reappraisal of the radical Left should be the record of snubs and betrayals committed by radical intellectuals against ordinary working people and their often glamorless efforts to better their lot in the face of an immensely powerful corporate elite. This record is made easier to grasp by the words and actions of those in the New Left who are pedantically repeating all the mistakes of the past. The campaign against the UFT in New York, the dual unionism being promoted by black separatists and their campus allies in the auto industry, the contemptuous attitudes toward low-income whites held by many in the New Politics movement, the opinion that working-class anti-Communism is *merely* ignorant and reactionary—all these are part of a sorry drama which is reenacted in almost every generation. There are many among the intellectuals to voice dissatisfactions with the American worker and few, such as Hoffer, among the workers to answer back. Votes, not words, too often tell the final story.

But what is saddest about the current swing to the Right by numbers of lower-income whites is the realization that the frustrations which created it could—even now—produce a turn toward the democratic Left. It may seem quixotic to suggest this today, when leaders of the New Left are prophesying repression and even some who consider themselves part of the democratic Left are in a pessimistic droop. But the same failing that caused the Left to overlook the danger of a conservative backlash can also cause a blindness to the possibilities for a resurgence of the movements for change. Paradoxically, the backlash itself has proved that the average white American is not an inert atom in a mass society—a favorite theory of the disillusioned 50's which the New Left took more or less for granted. He has shown that he can respond effectively to fear and anger. It is not impossible that, were a thoughtful appeal made to his own democratic traditions and radical impulses, he could also be won to a new politics of hope.

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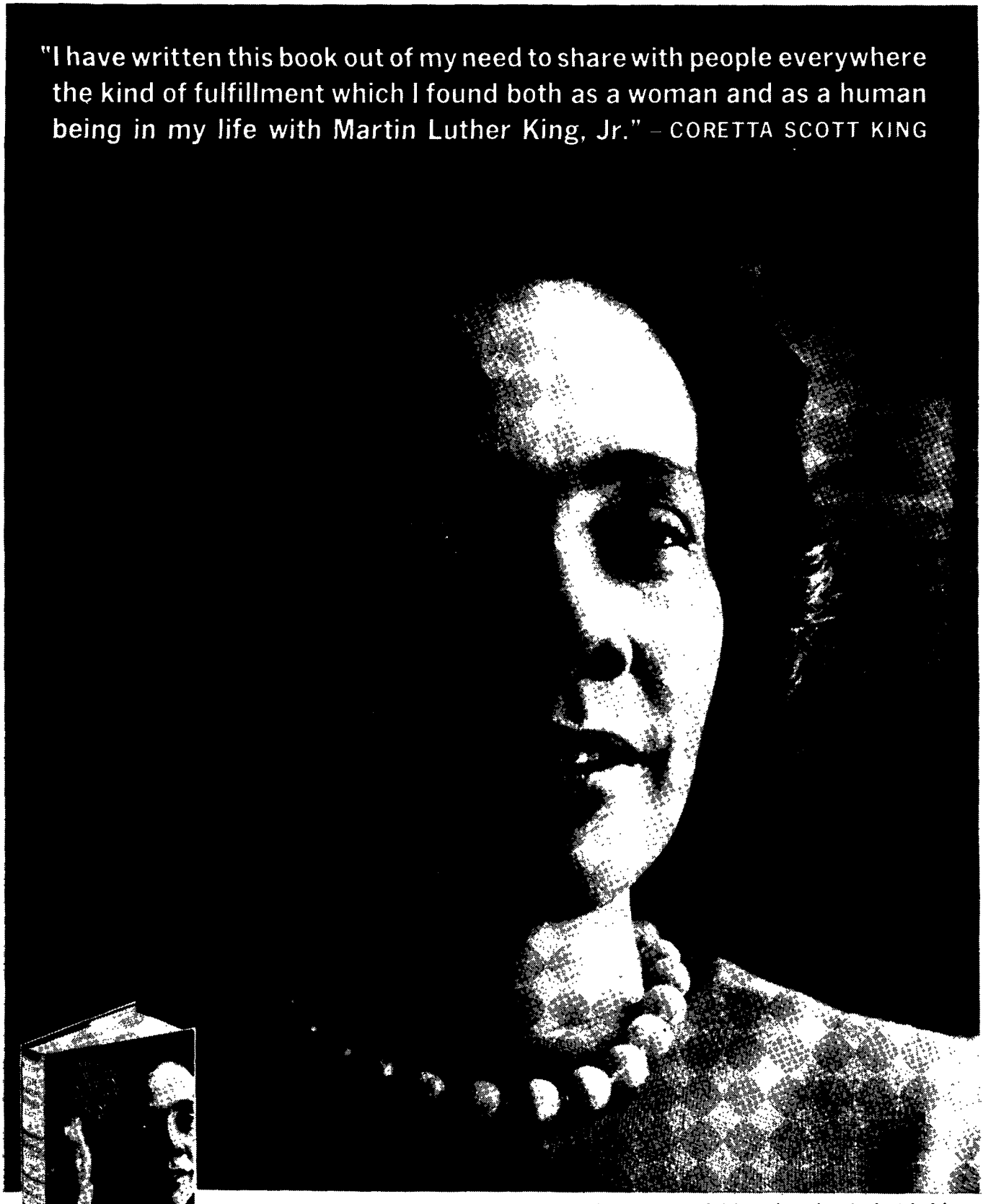

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The Autonomy of History

SOCIAL CHANGE AND HISTORY. By ROBERT A. NISBET. *Oxford University Press. 335 pp. $6.75.*

Reviewed by DENNIS H. WRONG

ROBERT NISBET adopts in this book the same approach to intellectual history that he employed in his previous book, *The Sociological Tradition.* Instead of concentrating on individual thinkers or on recognized schools of thought, he follows the late Arthur O. Lovejoy in seeking to isolate "unit-ideas" which have dominated the thinking of many men of different countries and eras who were often on opposing sides of the major intellectual and ideological controversies that occupy the forefront of conventional histories of thought. In the earlier book Nisbet identified five such unit-ideas —*authority, community, status, the sacred,* and *alienation*—as the essence of the "sociological tradition" that emerged in the 19th century in response to the major historical convulsions Western Europe was then undergoing. The present book is concerned with a single idea: that of *growth* or *development* in human societies and institutions as suggested by the life-cycle of organisms, although Nisbet breaks this conception down into a number of constituent ideas such as *continuity, necessity, progress,* and *degeneration.*

Social Change and History is a far more successful application of the unit-idea approach than *The Sociological Tradition,* even though it deals with a much wider historical time-span—from the Greeks to contemporary American sociology —and covers a greater number of individual thinkers. Nisbet's aim in the earlier book was to call attention to the conservative pedigree of sociology, which has long been insufficiently acknowledged, at least in the English-speaking countries. But he pursued this theme in a monolithic and one-dimensional manner, forcing such disparate thinkers as Tocqueville, Simmel, and Durkheim into a single mold while casting Marx as the heavy, the naive exponent of Enlightenment progressivism that is further anathematized in the present book. Perhaps it is simply easier to show that different theorists make use in diverse ways of a single idea than to establish convincing resemblances and identities centering around five ideas. Or perhaps the idea of development in history, deriving as Nisbet shows from an almost irresistible yet vague biological metaphor, is more complex and multifaceted than the ideas taken up in the earlier book. In any case, Nisbet utterly convinces us that theories of social change from Plato to Parsons truly are variations on a theme, whereas in the earlier book he seemed to be imposing on the classical sociologists a pattern of identity that was essentially linguistic rather than stemming from true imaginative and dramatistic affinities.

CONVENTIONAL classifications of theories of social change usually include cyclical views that identify recurring cycles of growth and decline; the Christian view, based on Augustine, of a unique story of redemption and fall; 18th-century beliefs in unilinear progress; 19th-century evolutionism conceiving of history on the analogy of the Darwinian evolution of species; Hegelo-Marxist dialectical theories that combine cyclical and unilinear views by picturing history as a spiral movement; and the neo-evolutionist theories of contemporary functionalist sociologists. Such accounts accentuate the diversity of these conceptions, stressing in particular their contrasting "optimistic" or "pessimistic" attitudes toward history. Nisbet persuasively argues that this diversity is less profound than the underlying similarities stemming from the pervasive hold on men's minds of the metaphor of growth transferred from the biological realm to human life and history.

THE EARLIEST version of the growth metaphor in Western thought is the Greek concept of *physis,* developed most fully by Aristotle, that imputes to every living thing an inherent potency to realize its nature through a distinctive pattern of growth. "Being" and "becoming" are united in this teleological conception. From the earliest Greek myths to the present day, observation of the seasonal cycle of plant life, the most visible and dramatic manifestation of the process of growth and decay, has been the source of a powerful metaphor capturing the human imagination. Thus Robinson Jeffers in "Shine, Perishing Republic," a poem affirming the decadence of the United States: "I sadly remember that the flower fades to make fruit,/ the fruit rots to make earth/ Out of the mother; and through the spring exultances,/ ripeness and decadence; and home to the mother." Except for the grandiose Spenglerian mood of self-pity, the author of these lines might have been Hesiod, Ovid, or Lucretius.

But the Greeks clearly distinguished between the indwelling pattern of growth shaping the lives of peoples and the actual course of events, so full of accidents, contingencies, interruptions and reversals of the developmental cycle. Herodotus and Thucydides were, after all, also Greeks. Unlike Nietzsche in *Zarathustra,* the classical thinkers did not interpret the eternally recurring cycles as requiring a lit-

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eral re-enactment of the events and re-creation of the personalities of the past. Thus a disjunction between the overall determining pattern of social change and the actual course of history was acknowledged by the earliest users of the growth metaphor. The difference between postulated world-historical patterns and sequences of change, and the interpretation of particular time and space-bound historical events, is Nisbet's major thesis, as becomes evident in the long final chapter where he devastatingly arraigns contemporary theorists of social change for failing to grasp the distinction. This is the significance of his title, for his aims are more ambitious than merely to make a graceful contribution to the history of ideas—although he has done that too.

St. Augustine repudiated the classical—and pagan—notion of recurrent cycles, insisting that history was a single epic of growth and decline beginning when God created Adam and due to end with the imminent destruction of the world. To Augustine, any doctrine of eternal recurrence was bound to minimize the significance of the unique, redemptive event of the birth of Christ. Yet the rhythm of growth and decay he discerned in history reflected the classical pattern. He added to it two notions that remained central in later philosophies of history: an iron historical *necessity*, in his view imposed by God, and endemic *conflict* as the immediate instigator of historical change, conflict between good and evil as he saw it.

No basic modifications of the classical cyclical pattern occurred until the 17th century. The Renaissance and the beginnings of science then led a number of thinkers, of whom Francis Bacon is the best known, to conceive of the increase in knowledge as a cumulative process comparable with the progressing education of a single man but with the crucial difference that the decline and loss of mental powers occurring in old age and their eventual extinction by death fail to take place. "Within the bare space of a century, the idea of progress passed from a descriptive generalization embracing knowledge alone to one comprehending the whole of civilization and human culture, including even morality." The 18th-century philosophers repeatedly drew on the ancient analogies between history and organic growth or the human life-cycle, but in contrast to the classical view, they cut off the cycle at the top and treated its ascending phase as ever-continuing.

But the older drama of growth and decay was not entirely forgotten: the reaction against "the pieties of progress" at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century led to its revival in the writings of Burckhardt, the Adams brothers, Nietzsche, Spengler, and many of the founders of sociology whose ideas were the subject of Nisbet's previous book. Oswald Spengler persuaded himself and his wide reading public after the First World War that his theory of culture cycles was truly original and that the Greeks "knew nothing of change and development," although he was clearly guilty of a "confusion of his own 'intuition' with what had in fact been acquired through a conventional classical education."

The 18th- and 19th-century theorists of progress and social evolution distinguished even more sharply than the Greeks between the determining immanent pattern of change and concrete historical events. The basic pattern applied only to "universal history," to human civilization thought of as a singular entity. A particular people might flourish and decay, innovate but succumb, as Hegel put it, to the "poison draft of the very elixir it created." This focus on mankind as a whole preserved the postulated immanent pattern from being tainted by the "fallen world of appearances" of the observed historical record reported by empirical historians. Only the pattern discernible in the movement of humanity in the large represented "natural history," revealing the true nature and potential of man and society free from accidents and interferences. "The distinction between the actual, minutely recorded history of a thing and the history that we conceive as flowing from its very nature, when not deflected or otherwise interfered with, remains a vital distinction for most of us even though we rarely today make it as explicit as did the philosophers of the 18th century."

Most of us who first studied sociology in the late 30's or early 40's were brought up on the fallacies of 19th-century social evolutionism, for these were the years when functionalism, with its emphasis on the simultaneous interdependence of the institutions of a society rather than on their change and development over time, was supplanting evolutionism as the most general theoretical perspective on human society. Nisbet's chapter on the evolutionists is the best brief summary and critique of their approach that I have read. Although the evolutionists are usually regarded—and often regarded themselves—as extending Darwinism to the sphere of social development, Nisbet points out that in fact they owed far less to Darwinian theory than to the venerable developmental conceptions that go back to the Greeks. The conviction that species had evolved from simple to complex forms was a thoroughly familiar one by the time Darwin published his major opus. His contribution was to put forward natural selection as a plausible, and later fully confirmed, theory of the causal agency producing evolution. Most of the social evolutionists, however, did not apply to social change some equivalent of natural selection but merely the concept of evolution itself. They arranged human history into a series of successively more complex institutional stages, but they overlooked the fact that, even if their arrangement had been accurate, "*a trend is not a law*," as Karl Popper has convincingly argued in *The Poverty of Historicism*.

If Augustine's epic treats God as the Unmoved Mover of the historical process, none of the secular theories of social change, whether cyclical or unilinear, succeeds in clearly explaining *why* change conforming to the various patterns they discern takes place, or *how* the passage from one stage to another comes about. The absence of a convincing answer to "what makes the wheels go around?" or

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"what propels mankind ever upward and onward?" is a common failing of all of them. Here is where metaphor does the work of explanation, for in the case of plants, animals, men, and even entire species, biochemical processes, physiological maturation, individual learning, and the genetics of natural selection adequately account for observed processes of growth, decay, death, and evolutionary speciation. The theories of the moderns, when applied to human society, do not advance much beyond Heraclitus's assumption that change is simply a brute fact of the universe characterizing all things within it.

I have exaggerated slightly in the two previous paragraphs, for it was chiefly Herbert Spencer and the post-Darwinian theorists who treated evolution as a kind of self-propelling force. Most of the philosophers of progress and evolution did, as Nisbet shows, advance some notion of uniformly operating causes that served to initiate the developmental process and keep it in continuing motion. And, like Augustine's view of the role played by the struggle between good and evil, they frequently located the moving force of the process in some form of conflict, either within man or between man and his environment: for Kant it was the "unsocial sociability" of human nature, for the early economists the insatiability of human wants, for Hegel the dialectic, for Comte man's craving for increased knowledge and power, for Marx the class struggle. Yet most of these purported causal agencies are unsatisfactory, for, stipulated as universally present in human nature or society, they violate the rule that constants cannot adequately explain variables, and it is precisely change and temporal variation with which the historical record, whether arranged in an orderly sequence of evolutionary stages or not, confronts us.

In treating Marx as a typical evolutionist, I think Nisbet fails to recognize the superiority of Marxism as a generalized logical—if not necessarily empirically accurate—model of social change. As an operative cause of historical movement,

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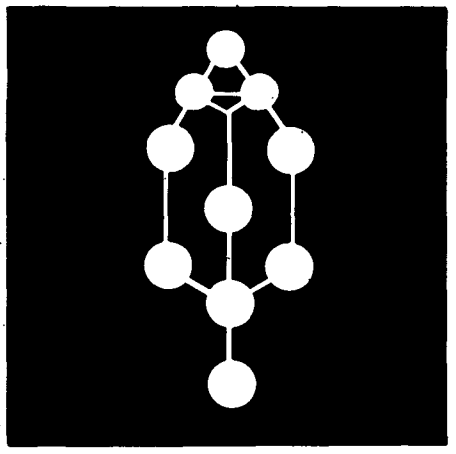

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class conflict is not altogether comparable with the forces singled out by other evolutionist thinkers. To begin with, it is not a psychological impulsion rooted in an unchanging human nature but a truly sociological aspect of the structure of societies. Secondly, the classes engaged in conflict vary under different social orders, unlike the egoistic and altruistic proclivities of human beings, or their aspirations for knowledge, assumed by such thinkers as Kant and Comte. Finally, Marx does not see classes and class conflict as constants even within the same type of society: they emerge in time with the growth of class consciousness *(Klasse für sich)* as a result of definite and fully specified social processes. (And, of course, they disappear altogether in the final, eschatological transcendence of the historical process with the attainment of communism.)

I do not believe, as Nisbet does, that the continuing appeal of Marxism to first-rate thinkers is entirely a matter of political faith. As a theory of change, Marxism seems to me less wedded to biological analogies with organic growth and evolution than other 19th-century developmental theories, just as Talcott Parsons's functionalism is superior as a theory of social equilibrium to earlier versions more crudely dominated by the organicist analogy between the structure of societies and the integration of an organism.

THE MOST original and exciting chapter in *Social Change and History* is the last one, in which Nisbet brilliantly exposes the essential fallacy of all developmental theories. All of them, he argues, survey the totality of the past from the vantage point of the thinker's present location and discern a continuous movement divisible into stages or phases. Looking back on the entire movement, the beginnings of the later stages can be detected in the earlier stages, and the complete cycle or evolution appears to reveal "processes of unfolding, of genetic continuity, of the latent evolving into the manifest, and so on." But the continuity the thinker discerns, and the stages and phases he identifies are *ex post facto* intellectual ordering devices which have nothing to do with the unique, contingent events that are the actual substance of history as it is lived by mortal men.

We are aware of the arbitrariness of "periodization" when dealing with the history of particular nations or civilizations. Nisbet notes that conventional histories of civilizations start with the Egyptians, drop them after the year 1000 BCE to take up the Chaldeans, move to Greece, next to Rome, then to the medieval period of Western Europe, and on to the 20th century touching on various peoples and places along the way. But the Egyptians did not disappear after 1000 BCE, nor did the Italian peninsula revert to an uninhabited wilderness between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance. The point is that "civilization" is an abstraction, not a living entity that restlessly attaches itself to the Egyptians, the Romans, and other peoples and then relinquishes them—a useful abstraction, to be sure, but a non-Westerner would make quite a different selection from "world history" based on a different principle of abstraction that is a consequence of *his* present location. What is true of the history of civilization under Western eyes is equally true of even more comprehensive entities such as Humanity, Society, or Culture when pictured as developing immanently through time.

Men are inescapably prone to conceive of history as a single unified drama—even the most conscientious and careful professional historians have tried their hand at it. But the developmental assumptions of philosophers of history seriously distort our understanding of causal relations when applied to more limited areas and periods than those embraced by mankind as a whole or even a particular civilization—to, for example, the history of one nation, economic system, or culturally unique institution in a single century or less. Functionalist sociologists have roundly discredited and rejected the sweeping evolutionary schemas of 19th-century theorists, yet when, sensitive to the common charge that they are unable to account for social change, they have striven to

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apply their concepts to the explanation of change, they have fallen back on the same assumptions of internal differentiation and continuous stages cherished by the evolutionists. Change is represented as resulting from the cumulation of the conflicts, tensions, and "role strains" present in a particular institutional system from its beginning to the point where a "developmental breakthrough" suddenly occurs and transforms the system. Since functionalists too have always been bewitched by a biological metaphor, that of the organism as a self-maintaining system of interdependent parts, it is hardly surprising that they should invoke the idea of self-generating growth when they turn to change, a consideration that Nisbet seems to me insufficiently to stress, evidently out of a stronger sympathy than my own for functionalism's primary concern with persistence, stability, and the unconscious wisdom of tradition.

WHATEVER THE usefulness for expository or dramatizing purposes of imagining Mankind or Western Civilization or Technology as huge, coherent, immanently developing units, to regard early 19th-century British capitalism, the traditional Chinese family, or Negro-white relations in the United States as similarly encapsulated, self-moving entities is to distort the historical record. Real history, Nisbet tells us, is not an affair of systems containing internal dynamisms but of the impact of "external" influences—wars, migrations, trading, the diffusion of new ideas—on the nations, classes, communities, and institutions whose fate arouses our interest. History is a record of concrete, dated *events* and "it is the event as such: the intrusion, the impact, the impingement upon a given mode of social behavior of some force that cannot, by its nature, be deduced from that mode of behavior." Comparative historical studies are worth undertaking in order to answer such general but definite questions as "under what conditions do revolutions occur?" rather than for the purpose of bringing different societies under the overarching umbrella of a universal developmental theory. Nisbet's conception of the methods and uses of historical study is close, as he acknowledges, to that of Max Weber, although his views have been primarily influenced by those of his former teacher at the University of California, the late F. J. Teggart, to whom the book is dedicated.

"If," Nisbet concludes, " 'unique events,' as they are called, are not amenable to the systematic needs of social theory, so much the worse for theory. . . . Whatever the demands of social theory, the first demands to be served are those of the social reality we find alone in the historical record." Rarely has the autonomy of history as human experience in all its contingency and irreducible reality been so soundly and eloquently defended.

Liberal Beliefs

A NEW JEWISH THEOLOGY IN THE MAKING. By EUGENE B. BOROWITZ. *Westminster Press. 224 pp. $6.50.*

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Reviewed by LOUIS JACOBS

FOR A long time now, many Jewish thinkers and scholars have proudly, even smugly, declared that there is no such creature as Jewish theology. Repelled by theological claims to certainty in areas in which certainty is not to be had —it has been said that some theologians talk as if they have just had lunch with the Deity—and stressing the Jewish preoccupation with action, some Jews have tended to look askance at the whole theological enterprise. The trouble with this, however, is that in a comparatively secure Jewish community like the American it is precisely theological thinking to which many sensitive Jews have now become attracted. No longer content with pious exhortations to follow the Jewish way of life, these younger thinkers wish to explore the meaning of that which has

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provided Jewish life with its inspiration. They want to know what it is that Judaism would have them believe. Eugene Borowitz is prominent among these new Jewish theologians on the American scene, most of whom are pupils of the late Leo Baeck.

In the two volumes under review (the only Jewish contribution to a series by Christian writers on new directions in theology today), Professor Borowitz declares his belief that the need for religion to accept the secular challenge—so dominant a theme in contemporary Christian theology—is not a burning problem for Jewish thinkers. On the contrary, Jewish theological concern is especially evident among those who are profoundly dissatisfied both with traditional formulations, or the lack of them, and with secularity. "Contemporary Christianity," he writes, "may be agog with secularity. Since we were in it up to our nostrils for several decades, we know we are men of faith precisely because we must move beyond it. We obviously do not believe as much as our grandfathers did, but we have discovered painfully that we believe far more than our society does." So much by way of prolegomenon. Borowitz goes on from here to deal in the first volume chiefly with the question of theological methodology; in the second, he puts the methodology to work on such problems as the "death of God," the Covenant, the liturgy, and the Jewish confrontation with the secular world and Christianity.

THE ASSERTION that theology has no place in Judaism is dismissed by Borowitz as *chutzpah*. With a great gift for expounding the most abstruse themes, he surveys the main previous attempts at working out a theology for 20th-century Jewry (explaining Buber, for instance, with greater clarity than Buber himself was generally able to muster), stating the various options fairly and with a considerable degree of admiration but also exposing their shortcomings. Thus, Leo Baeck's emphasis on ethical monotheism as the basis for his idea of revelation through the Jewish people is found wanting from both the Jewish and the philosophical point of view: for does not Jewish particularism now risk distorting the universalistic message? Moreover, as history has posed its tests and plunged men into crisis, they have tended to discover a state of permanent ambiguity, rather than the Kantian categorical imperative upon which Baeck relied.

The functionalism of Mordecai M. Kaplan also fails in Borowitz's view because what once made God function in people's lives was their firm conviction that He was real—a conviction, one need hardly add, that some find hard to come by today. If, furthermore, Jews are primarily a folk like every other folk, as Kaplan would have it, it follows that their secular activities must be judged of equal worth as their religious activities; but can it seriously be maintained that Jewish folk dancing is the equivalent of the study of the sacred books? In the case of Buber, Borowitz rightly points out our indebtedness to this philosopher's insight into the relationship of the Jew to God and to his fellow man, but he marks also the contradiction inherent in Buber's insistence that it is the person and not the folk that is paramount when it comes to action; for indeed, whether one speaks of the Covenant at Sinai or of this particular moment in time, an individual Jew's sense of relationship and duty will *always* be as much a matter of folk as of self. Finally, the traditionalist thinkers A. J. Heschel and J. B. Soloveitchick are found to be less than completely helpful because they rely ultimately on the truth of the traditional theory of revelation in a way unacceptable to many moderns.

BOROWITZ'S own approach is to refuse to act as if there were a truth superior to Judaism, but rather to have one's faith in Judaism come before any other faith one may have. This priority of faith constitutes Borowitz's methodological standpoint; and it is here, precisely, that we run into difficulties. As a liberal Jew Borowitz cannot opt for the Jewish tra-

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dition simply and without reservations; he claims the right to dissent. For instance, in the second volume he states that he finds it impossible to accept an "objective" view of revelation, in which God conveys propositions to man, but rather sees revelation only in "subjective" terms, as man's interpretation of the divine-human encounter.

ONCE THIS right of dissent is acknowledged, however, what becomes of the whole idea of the priority of faith? It will not do to argue, as Borowitz does, that all that is required is a shift of emphasis from earlier liberal views. "When in all seriousness I am moved to disagree, the responsibility now rests upon me to justify that disagreement. Previous generations of liberal Jews often acted as if Judaism had to justify itself to the Jew. I am arguing that making Jewish faith primary calls on me to justify myself when I dissent from it." But dissent—whether it is undertaken jubilantly or with extreme reluctance—is dissent nevertheless, and it must, according to Borowitz's own premises, involve the granting of priority to the grounds of dissent over the traditional faith.

Indeed, Borowitz himself seems to admit as much when he writes:

> In terms of my Jewish affirmations, religious existentialism is the most complementary philosophic style available. It supplies the hermeneutic instrument for interpreting Judaism in modern terms but may not usurp that role as a means to replace the primacy of traditional Jewish faith for me. This is what this self-conscious commitment to open traditionalism clarifies. Now when the religious existentialist insights contradict what study shows is classic Jewish faith, as is true in the areas of society, history, and law, I do not automatically judge Judaism to be wrong. Rather I investigate to see what it is that I truly affirm. . . . In the case of society and history it seems to me the existentialists are wrong and need the interpersonal, time-oriented vision which Jewish faith provides. In the case of law I dissent from both positions. That leads me to a Jewish sense that all authentic existence must be structured, an understanding foreign to existentialism. Yet I am also moved to an existentialist reworking of Jewish law in personalist terms it could not traditionally tolerate.

This comes perilously close to having one's cake and eating it. The primacy of the traditional faith is affirmed in the areas of society and history but not in the area of law. But primacy in this context is indivisible; a partial primacy is no primacy at all. And since ultimately Borowitz makes his own personal decision, and is prepared to question the existentialist insight in all three areas, what can he mean when he says that he finds religious existentialism to be the hermeneutic instrument for interpreting Judaism?

THE DIFFICULTY, it seems to me, stems in the main from Borowitz's implied belief that in order to be modern or liberal one must have a philosophy—be it existentialism or some other current trend; this is how the problem of primacy arises in the first place. But it is not at all clear why such a "philosophy" should be needed, either as a means of safeguarding one's autonomy or as an instrument with which to grasp Judaism. The task of the theologian can just as properly be a reverential but critical investigation of Judaism executed not by comparing it with other "philosophies" but by trying to see how its traditional formulations cohere with the rest of our knowledge. When in the process certain traditional views are given up (e.g., the Mosaic authorship of the whole of the Pentateuch), this need not be done out of submission to a rival system but in order to *make sense* of Judaism itself.

Basically what is involved here is a question of logic, where the subject of primacy does not arise: to obey the formal laws of human reasoning is not to make God subordinate to logic but to enable the language we use about God and Judaism to do its work.

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Reviewed by ELIZABETH STEVENSON

NEAR THE END of his recently published biography of Hemingway, Carlos Baker quotes with some relish the writer's backhanded tribute to Henry James. Hemingway was immobilized in Venice, not well, not able to be out on the town seeing, tasting, drinking, smelling, loving, bullying in his usual style. A plane accident in Africa, and other ills, kept him in bed reading. To the Italian girl whom he idealized as the Laura-like mistress of his old General Cantwell in *Across the River and into the Trees,* he explained genius offhandedly. "James, he told Adriana, was a great American writer who came to Venice, looked out a window, smoked his cigar, and thought. Apart from the cigar, his own case was not greatly different. . . ." Hemingway had not cared for Henry James, but he had cited him in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech as an honorable and great writer who had not received the Prize. There was something of likeness between them, he saw at last, something of a bond in their both having lived sincerely for the same art and sacrificed life to it. Otherwise, no two men and no two writers could have been more different. The books on Hemingway and James, coming out in the same season, illustrate the splendid variety possible in biography, and refute anyone's prescription that biographies should be made thus and so.

But then what is biography for, what does it do? Baker says it is "a thousand scenes"; Edel says it is "inner experience." The two books, reviewed by coincidence or design side by side, make a nice contrast in virtues and vices in the art of biography in a decade rich in "lives."* The two books should not bear alone the weight of judgment. They have good company these days. There is a general high standard of performance rewarding the expectation for biography. Documentation is expected, but pedantry, while eagerly practiced by the hundreds of second-level writers of biography, is not going to be rewarded. The writer is supposed to swallow his documents and digest them and present his life in as interesting a form and with as much suspense as a novel. He has a better chance than in the experimental fiction of the day. Biography has a ready-made form. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It tells a good story, that of birth, growth, decline, death. Its structures echo the rhythms of the body, the sequences of life. It is with our blood and breath that we respond to a good life story. It is the existential art. It assures us of the *thereness* of a man, of man in general, even of oneself.

With these things understood, there are as many different ways of telling a life story as there are biographers and subjects. The writer pins down reality by using homely, everyday facts. He releases significance from facts by arrangement, sequence, variation in the use of scenes, narration, analysis, and any other device which at the moment seems legitimate to him and furthers his particular aim. The shape of one particular life determines the shape of the book. Strictures of critics as to how biographies ought to be written, laid down as law, invite the triumphant success of a book resonant with life, a biography that disobeys all the critics' rules. Even a biographer's own guidelines may be viewed with a grain of salt, since he will often contradict his own axioms when confronted with the knobbiness of life which he must somehow subdue into book form. When Boswell tells us that Samuel Johnson sent out for oys-

ELIZABETH STEVENSON *is currently at work on a study of the life and times of Frederick Law Olmsted. Miss Stevenson's most recent book is* Babbitts & Bohemians: The American 1920s.

* Samples: in 1959, Chambers's *Stonewall Jackson* and Ellmann's *James Joyce;* in 1963, Aileen Ward's *Keats;* in 1966, Justin Kaplan's *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain;* in 1967, David Higgins's *Portrait of Emily Dickinson.*

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ters for his cat Hodge, he tells us something important about the imperious man, rough-featured, awkward, majestic, who lived in fear and trembling for his spiritual safety and was only momentarily comforted in his ordinary human vanity by being called "great." The inimitable little fact has reassured us that this man lived.

Living, too, although on different levels of intensity, are the two new examples of "lives."

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It is all a continuing drama of inner life, the dangers, difficulties, gains, fulfillments of that hidden life unknown to anyone but the sufferer or the rejoicer himself. It is a life guessed from letters, deduced from the tone and subject matter of the writer's fiction. In Edel's view, the novels and tales of children and adolescents, the tales James wrote after the playwriting

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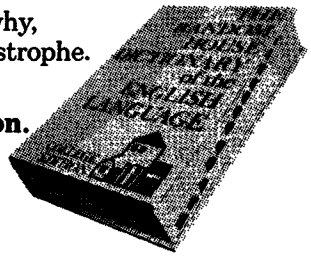

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failure, were for him a purging of anxieties and uncertainties, and a finding of himself through a reliving of his childhood in the versions of his stories. The general idea seems to bear weight. Some of the instances are humorlessly farfetched, as when, for instance, Edel writes:

> The murder of little Effie in *The Other House*, which inaugurates the series, can be read as inflicted at the age at which the little Henry, within the mature artist, felt himself annihilated by the brutality of the audience at *Guy Domville*. It will be recalled that James originally planned to have the child poisoned; but his selective imagination chose the form of death he himself had described at the Archbishop's when he had spoken of having been under water—"subaqueous" —at the time of his *débacle*.

The defect of the method is that the biographer seems to have put a cart before a horse. Looking for the artist's secrets in the works, he seems to be using them rather than perceiving them. His ambition is bold. "I have accepted the axiom of modern pschology that there is sequence and consistency in the stuff of man's imagination; that an artist's work is less accidental than it has seemed; and that even as form and discipline represent conscious effort on the part of an artist, there exists an equally consistent unconscious effort—an inescapable use of the buried materials of life and experience—to which the artist constantly returns. Biography has for too long occupied itself with the irrelevancies of daily life." Edel has been sustained in his long work on James by believing that he was in quest of "the secret of a man's life"—Thoreau's phrase. "It is the quest for this secret that I regard as the justifiable aim of literary biography. All the rest is gossip and anecdotage." Which is to arrogate everyone using different kinds of raw materials to a lower level. This of course would have to include James Boswell, with his trivial reportage of the great Doctor's eating habits, his cat's eating habits, his dress, his walk, his progression through the coffee houses, his least interesting pronouncement.

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Edel is most emphatic: "The physical habits of the creative personality, his 'sex life' or his bowel movements, belong to the 'functioning' being and do not reliably distinguish him from his fellow-humans."

It is dangerous to make hard and fast rules, for others or for oneself. Even bowel movements cannot be excluded from possible discussion. Erik Erikson has shown, in *Young Man Luther*, how relevant to Luther's emotional and even spiritual life his constipation was—this with no loss of dignity and interest and even wonder. One is thankful that Edel is not faithful to his own precepts. He makes James a realer man by telling us about his bicycling, about his habit of embracing and laying on of hands, about how the shaving off of his beard signified a new life. Even the comparatively unexciting but human event of Henry James's having cocoa informally with a beautiful young actress, Elizabeth Robins, from whom he learned a great deal about backstage events, warms the surrounding pages of psychological analysis.

The service Edel does best for James is to make the reader understand that the writer's feeling for his art was warmly emotional. Edel quotes effectively from time to time James's self-exhortations, passages as near to prayer as he probably ever came, in his notebooks. Lonely in his study at Rye during a great coastal windstorm, he feels "the old reviving ache of desire to get back to work." And thinking of a big novel he must begin to write: "Ah, once more, to let myself go! The very thought of it soothes and sustains, lays a divine hand on my nerves, and lights, so beneficently, my uncertainties and obscurities. *Begin*—and it will grow." Edel respects James deeply in his profession and presents the dignity and importance of it.

EXCEPT IN the respect that he too feels for his protagonist's profession of writing, no biography could be more opposite in its treatment than Carlos Baker's life of Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway was a man with virtues and vices like carbuncles sticking out

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all over him. Baker throws it all at you without mercy, a life lived at a high and self-punishing pitch of intensity. It was a naive, violent, devoted, scattered, used, wasted life, which somehow produced some of the best fiction of the generation. Baker's is a long, thick book, in which inner experience seems at first the thing least likely to be chanced on in a long succession of happenings, wars, travels, marriages, divorces, events of shooting, boxing, eating, drinking, loving, hating. It is a scenic and sensuous book, its values inhering in actions presented and seldom analyzed.

It seems artless, but of course it is not. Baker has a firm sense of what he is doing. He had written a critical study of Hemingway earlier and had chosen not to do it again. He has been pointlessly berated by Irving Howe in a *Harper's* review recently for not doing so. And he has been blamed by Elizabeth Hardwick in the *New York Review of Books* for being not one or the other, but for being both a journalist and an academic.

What Baker has attempted in the largest, most comprehensive way, with a chronology digested and regurgitated, in a succession of events which seem like existence itself, is to present the life which was the ground of the work, assuming that the reader knows the work and knows the repute of Hemingway. He, like Edel, has had a rationale. "If Ernest Hemingway is to be made to live again, it must be by virtue of a thousand pictures, both still and moving, a thousand scenes in which he was involved, a thousand instances when he wrote or spoke both publicly and privately of those matters that most concerned him. The small boy who shouted 'Fraid o'-nothing' became the man who discovered that there was plenty to fear. . . ."

CARLOS BAKER'S is a "daily life" sort of book. The "thousand pictures," the ten thousand details, crowding pell-mell, may give one indigestion—particularly in the first third of the book—but the pace does not tire (however much the reader, temporarily, may), and the book gains in power as it accelerates. The biographer has made a deliberate mosaic, not an accidental one. And, as a matter of fact, he is not true to his proposition that a life is (altogether) a thousand pictures. The actions and the years are laced together with comment. He speaks of young Hemingway as "brutally outspoken" and forewarns that this is "a newly emergent trait visible in times of nervous stress." He underlines an emotion as a novelist might. Hemingway and his first wife, Hadley, had been skiing, a season of joy broken by weather. "The wind and rain of a season of thaw were always afterwards associated in his mind with the prospect of imminent disaster."

Baker psychologizes. "The pretense that his boyhood had been rough and dirty, the threatening stance of the tough guy in the face of those who crossed him, and the assumption of the role of the maturing artist who had lost his early bloom and was now as worn as old saddle leather, were all facets of the public image that Ernest wished to project." This was Ernest at thirty. "Truth-stretching had been among his leading avocations since boyhood."

The best pages, however, follow sustained flights of action and movement, as when Hemingway as war correspondent in France moved cross-country with guerrillas, or with Buck Lanham, the American officer who indulged him but came to value him too, in his role as coordinator of the regular and the irregular forces. Splendid use of detail makes living a late journey westward across the United States by automobile. "The car was crammed with luggage and Ernest was enthralled by the appearance of the countryside. All across Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming, he counted and identified every bird he saw and kept a running record of the wild animals. He insisted on stopping at grocery stores in the smaller towns to buy apples, cheese, and pickles, which he washed down with Scotch and fresh lime juice. They listened to the World Series on the car radio. When the national anthem was played, Ernest always removed his cloth cap and held it unostentatiously against his chest in a comic gesture of patriotism. Bulletins about the dying Pope Pius XII frequently interrupted the broadcasts. Each time this happened, Ernest quietly made the sign of the cross. In Iowa they made a point of driving through Parkersburg, Pauline's birthplace [the deceased second wife], and Dyersville, where Ernest's great-grandfather, Alexander Hancock, had settled in 1854." And so on and so on, to the beguilement of every reader who wants to know what happened next. It is told with gusto.

EDEL USES habits and incidents of "daily life" to enhance his psychological analysis; Baker analyzes his piled-up incidents and events of "daily life" to recreate a coherent if not entirely explicable character. The virtue of his book is that Hemingway escapes us; there seems to be more of him than we will ever know. Much of the teasing interest is in the discrepancy between the man as he lived and the man who wrote. To be fair to Baker, it must have been as inexplicable to Hemingway himself and his friends as to Baker. Baker has simply given us the setting and the character in all fairness and set the problem, not solved, not solvable, in front of us. He sends us back to the books, that is, Hemingway's books, with an increased sense of wonder.

In honest wonder, biography contemplates the contradictions of the single human person. It is sobering to realize that only the last several hundred years of Western history has been a time to foster the art. Eastern cultures did not; Sovietized Europe and Asia have not; it is doubtful if the space age will. The clean, computerized society of the future promises impatience with what "will not compute." Human nature will have to lop off extravagances to fit with moon-shots and Mars-shots. Only joint or committee purposes will serve. The heroism or the monstrosities of the future will be quiet, joint, long-term, stretching beyond the life of one man.

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An American Communist

A LONG JOURNEY. By GEORGE BLAKE CHARNEY. *Quadrangle. 340 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by
MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM

THERE HAVE been a great many autobiographies of leading Communists and ex-Communists, both in the United States and elsewhere. Occasionally they have been important contributions both to literature and to history; Trotsky's is an outstanding example. In the United States, only Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* has much claim to literary merit, although a number of other ex-Communists have written books important for what they told about the party's activities. Most such autobiographies, however, are of only minor importance as documents; most of what they reveal is unintentional. The reminiscences of Louis Budenz fall in this category. Budenz's first autobiography, published after he broke with the party, was interesting chiefly for its almost inadvertent description of his own role, whose significance he did not seem to realize, in preparing the murder of Trotsky, and for the fact that he still believed in the validity of the Moscow Trials. Later, Budenz told more; unfortunately his revelations were about things concerning which he knew nothing.

A Long Journey, George Blake Charney's account of his experiences in the party, certainly tells a good deal more than such works as Budenz's. But most of what it tells is not really news. Charney was a major participant in the struggle for control of the party in the years following Khrushchev's secret speech to the Twentieth Congress. But even here, the details that he adds serve only to flesh the story out a little; they do not in any way alter the meaning of the events as they appeared on the public record. Charney does, to be sure, give a first-hand account of how it *felt* after almost a

MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM'S *last previous article, "Is There a Backlash Vote?" appeared in August.*

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quarter century as a party functionary to have the ideological rug yanked out from underneath him. But even this scarcely ranks as a revelation; it *had* to feel that way, as any sensitive observer could know without being told.

At the same time, Charney's description of events is not always a reliable guide to what happened. This failing stems from a number of factors. One is that he still sees party policies and party events through a veil of factional loyalties; thus, "leftists" like William Z. Foster and Benjamin J. Davis, Jr. are described as placing loyalty to Moscow first and resisting Earl Browder's efforts to "Americanize" the party. But in fact Moscow had installed Browder as party leader after the ouster of Jay Lovestone precisely because it regarded Foster as too independent to be trusted. Before the Kremlin turned the 80 per cent majority in favor of Lovestone into an 80 per cent majority against him, it had turned a Foster majority into a majority for Lovestone's faction by a similar ukase—except that Foster had been permitted to remain in the party in return for a last-minute denunciation of his allies, James Cannon and Max Schachtman. Every twist of the party line under Browder—from "third period" leftism, to Popular Front and National Front, to the new "revolutionary" line between the Hitler-Stalin pact and June 22, 1941, to the ultra-rightist line of the "Teheran" period—was initiated by Moscow. This was not "Americanization" in any meaningful sense.

Nor did the policies of the Browder leadership in its final phase have much to do with traditional American radicalism. The CP was in the forefront of the wartime attack on civil liberties; it even supported the uprooting and internment of Japanese-Americans. The Communist opposition to strikes during wartime, or to pressure for reforms, was expressed in condemnations of John L. Lewis, Walter Reuther, and A. Philip Randolph. And it was carried to an extreme of absurdity when Harry Bridges declared that the strike weapon was "overboard not only for the duration but after the war. . . . We reject any hostility of labor to capital as such and any hostility to unions as such, knowing well that such approaches are luxuries that neither can now afford." And when Browder—having called for "national unity of all sections of the population, including large capital" and "the freedom of capital to concentrate and centralize itself"—was told by a reporter that he sounded like the National Association of Manufacturers, he replied: "That's fine. I'm awfully glad to hear that. I'm not sorry when you say that leading members of the NAM talk like me. My report to the plenum was distributed to every delegate at the economic conference of the NAM, and I am told most of them read it through. I am very happy when I get news like that." In this light, Charney's tribute to Brow-

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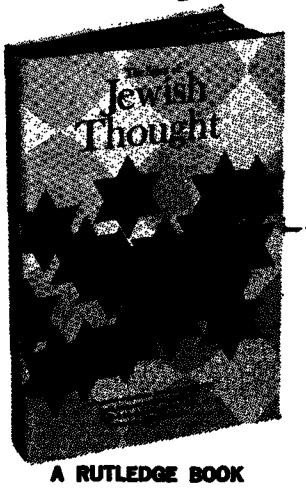

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der's "penetrating insight into the changing nature of American capitalism" seems a trifle excessive.

The fact is that the American Communist party, in the last years of the war, was essentially a party of the Right—not because its members wanted such a line, but because Moscow did. The voice was Stalin's; only the phrases were Browder's. (This, of course, had also been the case in 1940 when Browder asserted: "The new Roosevelt course is essentially for America the same direction which Hitler gave Germany in 1933.") Mr. Charney had no direct responsibility for the ultra-right line of those years, having been in the army at the time. And he does note, in one of those asides in which he from time to time supplies evidence against his own theses, that "we had always been defensive about the United Front,* about our positive attitude to America, about our 'exceptionalist' views. In a way we were ready for criticism, ready to accept the fact that we had gone too far, that it was characteristic of small parties to indulge in patriotic fervor, and that now the time had come for readjustment and correction."

YET CHARNEY lets nostalgia cloud his view of the Communist party in that period—and in the Popular Front period from 1935 to 1939 as well—in a way that obscures the historical realities. And in suggesting a relationship between the attitudes of the party in those periods and the revolt of which he was a part after 1956, he does no service to the latter. For Charney and his fellow rebels in 1956-58 were committed not merely to polycentrism but to democracy within the party and to a democratic society. It was in the name of these concepts that they criticized and challenged Moscow. In contrast, the Communist party in the Popular Front and war periods had implicitly accepted the authority of the Kremlin, the concept of the monolithic party, and the goal of a party dictatorship.

Indeed, from the point of view of many in the non-Communist Left, it was precisely in these periods that the Communists were most objectionable. For, identifying themselves with the existing power structure and obtaining posts within it, they were sometimes in a position to misuse power against their opponents of the non-Communist Left; they did not neglect the opportunity. Trotskyists were of course their first preoccupation (I know of one leading Communist who tried to find out what factory his Trotskyist brother-in-law was working in, so as to get him fired!); Charney mentions, in passing, the Communist support of the Smith Act prosecution—this was the first use of that law—of the Minneapolis Trotskyists. But anyone in the non-Communist Left could easily become a "Trotskyist" in Communist terminology. And anyone—Left, Right, or Center—could become a "fascist" or an "agent of Franco" simply by opposing the party line. In the U.S., Communist power was not sufficient to endow such semantics with fatal consequences; in Spain it was. Charney says: "We appeared everywhere as the most articulate, consistent, and valiant fighters against fascism." That was certainly how the Communists appeared to themselves; by definition, anybody whom they fought against was a "fascist." I cannot recall a single instance in which the American Communist party, in its days of prosperity, ever defended the civil liberties of a political opponent.

It was this sort of thing, even more than the sectarian excesses of the "Left" periods, that resulted finally in the Communists being largely isolated when they became the victims of persecution. People who had suffered at their hands were often more likely to gloat over their misfortunes than to rise to their defense. This was regrettable from the point of view of civil liberties, but it was a natural consequence of the Communists' own acts. Even those who did actively defend the rights of Communists generally did so not for the sake of the Communists but for the sake of the liberties they were being denied.

Nostalgia affects other aspects of Charney's account as well. Thus he writes that when he became organizational secretary of the Harlem Communist party in January 1937, "The party in Harlem . . . had several thousand members." And he says that the party had succeeded in electing two members of the City Council, Peter V. Cacchione and Ben Davis, Jr. There may well have been several thousand Communist party members in Harlem as the party defined that area for organizational purposes—essentially, all of Manhattan above 110th Street. But there were certainly not several thousand members in Negro Harlem, and the party's influence there was far less than Charney suggests. As for Cacchione and Davis, neither was in the City Council in 1937; the former was not elected until 1941, while Davis only entered the Council in 1943 when Adam Clayton Powell gave up his seat and supported Davis as his successor. Both elections belong to the war period, not to that of the Popular Front, and both had far more to do with the personal appeal of the candidates than with the strength of the party. No Communist candidate other than Davis ever got to first base in Harlem.

IT WOULD BE very unfortunate if readers were to accept Charney's version of either Communist or American history in the 30's and 40's. For the Communist party in that period was *not* a defender of democracy; it was a totalitarian movement that sooner or later cast a blight on everything it touched. I am quite ready to believe that Charney, like most of those who joined the party during the Popular Front period—and probably in any period—was basically motivated by humanitarian and in some sense by democratic impulses. But for those who remained in the party for any length of time, and submitted to its doctrine and organization, these impulses were perverted to the point where they became pressed into the service of their opposites. And that, rather than the failure of the movement itself, is the real tragedy of American Communism. It

*What Browder actually advocated in 1944-45 was not the United Front—an alliance between Communists and the non-Communist Left—but "national unity."

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is a tragedy which Charney recognizes in numerous perceptive asides (e.g., when he writes of the Khrushchev denunciation of Stalin that "we grasped the truth of the revelations not only on the basis of these events in Soviet history but on the basis of our own experiences—of the authority we exercised and abused, of our own misdeeds, of the countless numbers chastised and expelled on the flimsiest evidence. In fact, it soon became a grim commonplace in the heat of argument to speculate on the fate of dissidents had we achieved power in America"). But Charney often seems to forget the reality of this tragedy when he writes of the events in which he participated.

This is an ambivalence not peculiar to Charney. It affects many ex-Communists—or, indeed, persons who have broken with other groups after years of activity in them. It is easily understandable, and in human terms no great sin, but it does not make for good history. And *A Long Journey*, while an interesting and sometimes moving human document, is very bad history.

Hero

MY TURN AT BAT: THE STORY OF MY LIFE. By TED WILLIAMS (as told to John Underwood). *Simon & Schuster. 288 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD GROSSMAN

HIS EYES were 20/10, the Navy medics announced, a pair in ten thousand. He was, perhaps, perfectly suited to be doted on by nearsighted young bookworms in that fashion of the intellectual's envious love for the athlete which is peculiar to our America (old-world Isaac Babel, he of the spectacles on the nose, autumn in the heart, was obliged to cherish Cossacks: horsemen and rapists). I gave in to the spell early. As a little boy having a vocabulary of at most a dozen words in English, but already wearing glasses, I was taken to Fenway Park to be confronted with that ineffable wiggle of the hips Williams gave before he strode into a pitch, then the arc of his swing, and the flight of the ball like a dove into the bleachers.

"It's in the hips; in the ass," Williams says in his autobiography, a work ghosted by John Underwood, a Washington sportswriter, and published in the summer of Williams's reappearance on the scene. Years ago, however, it was in one's brain, *my* brain: that magnificent analogy, connecting slugging with thinking, baseball to art, which was not necessarily valid, and had astonishingly little to do with the actual man, Williams, a high-school dropout who made money hitting baseballs out of sight. I appropriated his well-known qualities for myself, imagining them the marks of universal genius: perfectionism, loneliness, bad luck undercutting good, the power to evoke adoration and hatred and despise both, even the outrageousness and the chronically boorish manners.

SUCH DAYDREAMS are probably not harmful if they are thrown over in time. It took me ten years to do it, approximately until Williams retired in 1960. To read his memoirs now still troubles a nerve of memory, especially when he tells of great things he did that I listened to over the radio (as when, playing in a doubleheader with a gold pin holding his cracked collarbone together, Williams got eight hits in nine at-bats, and Casey Stengel said, "I wish they'd take that pin and put it in some of my boys"). But for the most part, and I am grateful for this, it is hard to understand how infatuation with the man could ever have been among the very few most important things in life. Therefore *My Turn at Bat* is a therapeutic book, forcing us to make friends with a person of definitely human proportions, who once was better than anybody else at a very special task, but who in other respects was as ordinary and confused as any child propelled from an unhappy home to the glare of fame is liable to be.

His memoir is in the form of a monologue, rambling and intermittently chronological, often boring. The ghostwriting is not slick,

EDWARD GROSSMAN'S *"Journal from Israel" appeared in October.*

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which allows Williams to emerge believably. "My mother was strictly Salvation Army . . . a wonderful woman in many ways, but gee, I wouldn't have wanted to be married to a woman like that." Williams's father, sometimes a commercial photographer, a storekeeper, a U.S. marshal, didn't like it and abandoned the family. Young Ted was alone most of the day while "Salvation May" preached the Word to the Depression down-and-outers along the San Diego waterfront. Occasionally she impressed her son into service and he stood with her on street corners in a miniature uniform that humiliated him. He was skinny, nervous, a bad student, shy with girls. One realizes that if Williams had not discovered his gift and perfected it with something like the devotion of his mother's evangelism, he would have become another of the bombed-out faces in that part of the country Nathanael West wrote about, or a career man in the Navy. Williams dates his conversion to 1930, when he was twelve. "I wanted people to say, 'There goes Ted Williams, the greatest hitter who ever lived.'" The compulsion that may still drive American boys to play Fungo and Hit-the-Stick as long as there is daylight, every day for a whole summer, seems to have persisted with Williams for thirty years. Among the results was the beautiful swing I would be enchanted by, and which would cause Joe McCarthy, a manager, to tell Williams, "If I could hit like you, I'd play for nothing."

Of course Williams played for much more: he had the first $100,000 contract. He was a celebrity at the age of twenty, and this at a time when baseball was in fact the National Game, undiminished by TV, pro football, and expansion, and a baseball star had standing and burdens that are not easy for contemporaries of the Mets to understand. What I used to fantasize as Williams's artistic agony was actually the price he was paying for not being able to learn the larger, crucial game of the Star and his Public, in which newspapermen play the role of intermediaries. Because he was jealous of his privacy and impatient with stupid questions, his dealings with the press were poisoned. Williams can now admit some of it was his fault, but "I still think without question that Boston has the worst bunch of writers who ever came down the pike. . . ." This is genial compared with what he used to say in response to the provocation that was an aspect, in his case an inseparable one, of idolatry. "TED: GREATEST AMERICAN SINCE GEORGE WASHINGTON" the hand-made banners would proclaim, while out in the left-field stands one could hear the cretins, sucking on their Narragansett Beer, and calling, "Aw, Will-yams! Ya bum! Ya no-good! Ya mutha goes down!" Not without regret he tells stories of frightening instability, of slamming his fist through a water cooler after being booed, of spitting at the cheering crowds near the end of his career. Talking as a man of fifty, wiser in some respects even in spite of himself, he gives the impression of still nursing a wound in the heart, perhaps the unsurprising reward of the man who gets almost everything he wanted only to see that it is not quite what he expected. "I'm glad it's over," he says, and one knows no reason not to believe him.

However, in case the temptation revives to think of Williams as a "tragic" hero, there is testimony here that he did not fail completely to enjoy success. He can offer, suddenly, in the midst of a recitation of old grievances and triumphs, an anecdote that both has a quality of Ring Lardner and gives intimation of what it was like to be rich and famous, having once been a miserable near-orphan:

> For a young ballplayer there's never any shortage of available girls around a ball park. A lot of them move in pretty hard, and after a while a ballplayer learns to move pretty good himself. For me there was a long carry-over of that early fear that, boy, you mess around with a woman and you mess yourself up. I remember my first year we were in Detroit and this girl called up to the room. I was there laying on the bed listening to the radio. She said, "I saw you play today. I sure enjoyed watching you." "Oh, you did? Well, uh, what do you want?" "I just thought we

Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands
by Herman Pollack
Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands is a fascinating study of customs and everyday life of the people in German-Jewish communities in Europe between 1648 and 1806. The period was a crucial one for the Jewish people, since it followed the tragic Thirty Years' War and the Chmielnicki pogroms which forced them to leave their homes, migrate to new lands, and reconstruct their lives. In an attempt to create a picture of what life must have been like during this period, Dr. Pollack has examined the experiences of individuals anonymous in history, studying their practices and folkways in relation to the home, the cycle of birth, marriage, and death, education and intellectual development, folk medicine, and religious observances. Wherever possible, the origin and background of customs have been explored. **$12.50**

Number Words and Number Symbols:
A Cultural History of Numbers
by Karl Menninger
Since all cultures have evolved or inherited number systems of some sort, a comparison of their likenesses and differences yields significant clues as to universals of language and culture and a measure of the actual (or possible) extent of their divergence.
This is the immense work undertaken by the distinguished German scholar, Karl Menninger, in *Number Words and Number Symbols.* Fortunately, the author is a natural story-teller, and his story has an intrinsic fascination he brings out by casting much of it in anecdotal form. Although his story is disciplined by the scholarly imperatives of a number of diverse fields — linguistics, anthropology, historiography, mathematics, conceptual psychology among them — Menninger wears his learning as lightly as is consistent with the seriousness of his purpose and the thoroughness of his presentation. **$15.00**

Two Chicago Architects and Their Clients:
Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Van Doren Shaw
by Leonard K. Eaton
with an appendix by Elizabeth M. Douvan
The study of architectural patrons and clients is a vital if neglected part of architectural history, and this book marks an end to this neglect by revealing in depth the backgrounds, personalities, and attitudes of two groups of clients involved in the dramatic confrontation between Frank Lloyd Wright and the established eclecticism around the turn of the century.
The results are presented not as cold statistics but in the form of lively vignettes. In each case, the clients are studied first as a group, and a composite type emerges. They are then individually sketched in their social contexts. In each case, some sociological surprises emerge. **$10.00**

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WINTER READINGS

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could get together." "Well, uh, OK. OK. Why don't I meet you in front of the theater? We'll go to the movies." She turned out to be five or six years older than me, but it worked out all right. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes they get carried away. Eddie Waitkus got shot by a girl in Chicago.

One remembers that photographs usually showed Williams grinning, in such a handsome, open way that, if only for these instants, he must have been satisfied with his good fortune. Indeed, to have lasted twenty-five years as a professional player must have taken either a good deal of greed or, more likely, the resilience of a fairly simple outlook on all things save the truly complex matter of hitting a pitched ball.

Williams was drafted twice—as a Navy flight instructor in World War II (his eyes), and then as a jet pilot in Korea, where he was shot down. In a photo taken before he was shipped home from Korea, he is unrecognizable. He is injured, haggard, ill. This would be the picture that, studied, might deliver a few ideas concerning the problematic nature of being an American, and an American "star," abroad in the middle of our century, but to these things my old hero is blind, and maybe this is preferable. Could he have hit that marvelous .388 in 1957, at the age of thirty-nine, if he had been as "sensitive" as he was alleged to be? As for his intention to be known as "the greatest hitter who ever lived," he was, perhaps, but it is not statistically self-evident. It requires close demonstration to prove it, taking into account the hard-luck Red Sox teams he played on, his years in the wars, his injuries, his theories and temperament which prevented him from swinging at bad balls, and the conspiracy of pitchers seldom to give him anything to hit. He is unself-consciously aware of how good he was, but evidently he is disappointed that he was not clearly the best.

His new job as manager of the Senators is a risk for a man of Williams's make-up: ". . . managing is essentially a loser's job . . . try to keep count of how many get fired every year and you'll get dizzy." Yet the showing of his team, at least as of this writing, has been better than even his well-wishers could have hoped for, and it appears he may be happy. From my reading of the sports page: "Slugger Mike Epstein brought joy to the heart of manager Ted Williams by hitting a 400-foot home run and leading the Senators to a 6-5 victory over the Seattle Pilots." There is a resemblance to the homer Williams hit to win the All-Star Game in 1941, when he was twenty-three, Epstein had not been born, and while people were being killed far away:

> Well, it was the kind of thing a kid dreams about and imagines himself doing when he's playing those little playground games we used to play in San Diego. Halfway down to first, seeing that ball going out, I stopped running and started leaping and jumping out loud. I've never been so happy, and I've never seen so many happy guys.

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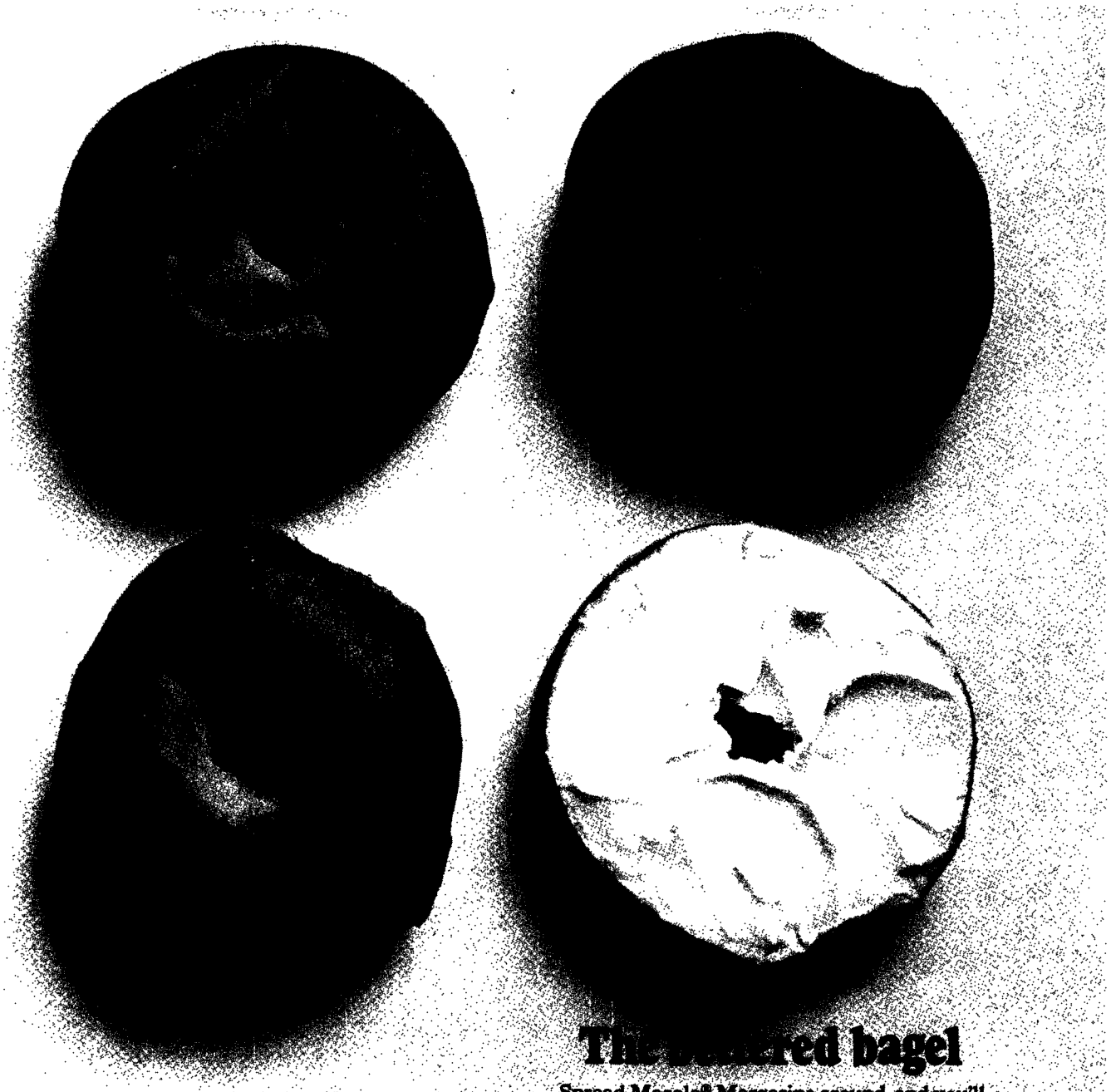

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